

Surgeon 'botched 1,000 breast operations': Specialist suspended as police launch criminal investigation

- **Ian Paterson suspended amid claims he removed non-cancerous lumps from 450 women who were healthy**
- **He also allegedly performed 700 'cleavage-saving' operations on women who had breast cancer, increasing the chance of condition returning**

By [Paul Bentley](#)



Breast cancer specialist Ian Paterson has been suspended by the GMC amid claims he removed non-cancerous lumps from at least 450 women

More than 1,000 women who were told they had breast cancer may have had botched or needless surgery, it emerged last night.

Surgeon Ian Paterson, who has been suspended from practising and faces a police investigation, is accused of operating on at least 450 women when they were perfectly healthy.

He also allegedly performed partial mastectomies on another 700 who did have cancer, using a technique which may have increased the likelihood of the disease returning.

Last night one lawyer said it was the largest clinical negligence case she had known in 16 years. Paterson, a breast cancer specialist, worked at NHS and private hospitals across the Midlands from 1994 until he was suspended last month. About 100 of his patients have launched claims for compensation, saying the operations should never have been performed.

Grandmother Gail Boichat, 57, found out she had been misdiagnosed with breast cancer in February this year.

She had been treated by Paterson in 1995 when he was working at the Good Hope NHS hospital in Sutton Coldfield. He performed an operation known as a cleavage-sparing mastectomy. This leaves some breast tissue behind for cosmetic reasons and is not sanctioned in Britain because of the risk of the cancer returning. He also prescribed the strong cancer drug tamoxifen, which she said brought on early menopause.

In February, after the General Medical Council began to investigate Paterson's professional history, she was recalled to hospital and told there was no evidence she had ever had breast cancer.



Misdiagnosis: Paterson worked at Good Hope NHS hospital in Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, where some patients found out earlier this year they had been wrongly told they had breast cancer

'I felt shock, horror, numbness. The words want to come out but you can't say anything. You can't speak,' she said. 'For a while I didn't even tell anybody about this. It messes with your emotions. My life has been ruined. I have to look at the scar every day now, knowing that I didn't need the operation.'

More...

- Consultant who helped deliver Cameron's daughter at centre of major probe into treatment provided to 1,500 women

She said she wanted compensation and for Paterson to face criminal charges because 'then I may get some closure. He punished me in some way and I think he should be punished'.

At least 100 of the female victims are being represented by legal firm Thompsons on a no-win, no-fee basis.



Kashmir Uppal, of Thompsons solicitors, said the allegations constituted the 'largest scale' clinical negligence case she's encountered in 16 years

Kashmir Uppal, national head of clinical negligence at the firm, accused Paterson of being a 'rogue surgeon', adding that the allegations against him constituted the 'largest scale' clinical negligence case she had encountered in 16 years specialising in the field.

'It's the largest case that I've dealt with, with the number of women involved and the reasons he was doing this, which we just can't establish,' she said.

'Clearly mistakes do happen in any clinical setting. Unfortunately, a midwife can misread a CTT trace, somebody will misread an X-ray, a GP won't recognise signs of colorectal cancer... This is different.'

Paterson was suspended by the GMC last month and is scheduled to face a hearing on his fitness to practise next summer.

He was first investigated by Heart of England NHS Trust over the cleavage-sparing operations in 2004 but was not told to stop performing them until an internal investigation concluded in December 2007.

Seven hundred of the women he treated were then recalled to the hospital so they could have their conditions reviewed. It is unclear what motivation the surgeon may have had for allegedly performing the unnecessary surgeries. Paterson, who is being represented by the Medical Defence Union, said: 'I am co-operating fully with the GMC investigation and cannot comment on any of the issues raised because of my duty of patient confidentiality and the ongoing investigation.'

He worked at hospitals across the Midlands including the NHS's Heartlands hospital, Solihull hospital, Sutton Coldfield's Good Hope hospital and the private Spire Hospital Parkway and Spire Hospital Little Aston.



Vast experience: Surgeon Ian Paterson has worked in hospitals across the Midlands including the NHS Heartlands hospital

Paula Naylor, of Spire Parkway hospital, said: 'We have referred this matter to the General Medical Council so they can investigate Mr Paterson's fitness to practise but cannot speculate on the outcome.

'Clearly we are looking at what we can learn from these events, but our priority right now is to hold consultations with those patients affected and to provide them with accurate information as quickly as possible.'

A GMC spokesman said: 'Dr Ian Paterson's registration is currently suspended, following an Interim Orders Panel meeting on 29 October 2012.

'This means the doctor cannot work as we investigate concerns about his fitness to practise.'

Paterson is also accused of making false claims to health insurers, allegedly claiming for more expensive operations than he performed and for others that he had never carried out.

Two of the patients claim Paterson submitted claims to insurance companies for operations which were more expensive than the ones he actually performed.

West Midlands Police last night confirmed a criminal investigation had begun.

Detective Chief Inspector Matt Markham said: 'A criminal inquiry has been launched and the force is working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service to determine the course of the investigation.'