

<http://somatosphere.net/2012/02/2822.html>

## Web Round Up

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By Branwyn Poleykett

An estimated 400,000 women around the world are living with breast implants manufactured by the now defunct company Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) using industrial grade silicone not approved for medical use. The scandal has raised [concerns](#) about the regulation of medical devices in Europe and provoked debate about neoliberal approaches to the body. [Anthropologyworks](#) points out that establishing who is responsible for safety failures in cosmetic surgery is a difficult issue to publicly parse because cosmetic surgery lies between “acceptable” medically justifiable intervention and “unacceptable” aesthetic surgery. In this case however the lines are blurred, many women who chose reconstructive surgery following mastectomy were given PIP implants – Rebecca Smithers writes in [The Guardian](#) about her own experience.

The controversy has drawn different responses from different health care systems and in the United Kingdom these responses have exposed the ongoing re-definition of risk and responsibility in a public health system struggling to cope with austerity. An article in [The Lancet](#) described the claim that women in the UK with PIP breast implants should not be unduly worried as “incredible”, adding that the PIP scandal presaged a “system of health care that cannot be held accountable by government, one that has no obligation to collect or supply accurate information about what it is doing, one that fiercely resists its duty of care to patients, and one that is more concerned with cost than it is quality”.

In Brazil, where according to anthropologist Alexander Edmonds cosmetic surgery is increasingly considered a “[right](#)”, many women are worried. However, the country’s reputation as a top destination for cosmetic surgery tourism does not appear to be damaged – the enterprising Viva clinic is already offering concerned medical tourists the chance to “[change your PIP implant in sunny Brazil](#)”.

Two scientific stories this month prompted questions about the securitisation of scientific data: when are scientific results too sensitive to share? Guy Reeves of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology [argued](#) that trials of genetically modified insects risk undermining public confidence if they fall short of full transparency. The National Scientific Advisory Board for Biosecurity asked the journals *Nature* and *Science* to

voluntarily redact methodological details and genetic data from recent research into the H5N1 virus. Scientists working in the Netherlands and Wisconsin claim to have manufactured a strain of the virus that transmits in ferrets, meaning it could be contagious and lethal to humans. It is feared that publishing data from their research could leave potential bio-terrorists with a "[catastrophic cookbook](#)" for influenza contagion. The NSABB agree that sensitive data should be shared with [reputable](#) scientists, although how this vetting process should be organised, and by whom, is not clear. Laurie Garrett [argued](#) that the controversy over the redacted publications reflects the struggle of policy makers to cope with the ethical and legal fall out of the synthetic biology revolution and the amateur "[life hackers](#)".

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