

[IMAGE]

Exposing the Dangers of Hip Replacement Surgery

By Editorial Staff

As if you need another reason to prioritize nonsurgical, nondrug health care whenever possible, consider a recent investigative article published in the *British Medical Journal*. According to the article, "Hundreds of thousands of patients around the world may have been exposed to toxic substances after being implanted with poorly regulated and potentially dangerous hip devices."

The devices in question are "metal-on-metal" orthopaedic surgical devices for hip replacement and resurfacing. In the United States, close to a million people have these metal-on-metal hip replacement/resurfacing devices. The author points out that the "average failure rates at seven years are 11.8% for resurfacing and 13.6% for metal-on-metal total hip replacement, although failure rates vary with the brand used. This compares with rates of 3.3%-4.9% for hip implants made of other materials." But even more disturbing, the study notes that "multiple studies and research [organizations] have warned about the carcinogenic [cancer-causing] potential of metal-on-metal hips."

The take-home message for patients is that while the marketing materials medical doctors read will likely underplay the risks involved in hip-replacement and other surgical devices, many of the risks are likely not yet known. Unfortunately, just because the Food and Drug Administration has cleared a surgical device for use in humans doesn't necessarily make it safe. To learn more, read the entire *BMJ* report online.

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