

## Prosecutor urges 4-year sentence for faulty breast implants

May 14 2013, by Pierre Pratabuy

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A French prosecutor on Tuesday called for the founder of a firm whose faulty breast implants sparked a global health scare to be given a four-year prison sentence on fraud charges.

In closing arguments at the trial in Marseille, prosecutor Jacques Dallest also called for PIP founder Jean-Claude Mas to pay a 100,000 euro (\$130,000) fine and to be banned from working in medical services or from running a company.

The defence is to present its closing arguments from Wednesday to Friday, after a month-long trial that was among the biggest ever held in France.

Deputy prosecutor Ludovic Leclerc urged the court to hold the defendants to account.

"This was a system of [massive fraud](#) against thousands of women, a deception the likes of which we have rarely seen... Once again, the pursuit of money was put before the health of others," he said.

Five PIP executives are on trial in the case including the 73-year-old Mas, charged with aggravated fraud for using industrial-grade silicone in [implants](#).

The others on trial are PIP's former general manager Claude Couty, quality control director Hannelore Font, technical director Loic Gossart

and product director Thierry Brinon.

The prosecutor called for prison terms of between six months and two years for the other defendants.

An estimated 300,000 women in 65 countries are believed to have received the implants, which are twice as likely to rupture as other brands, and more than 7,000 women registered as plaintiffs in the case.

One of the plaintiffs, Joelle Manighetti, said no sentence would be harsh enough for the many victims.

"Whatever the sentence, it will be only minutes per victim, which seems insignificant to us," she said.

News of the faulty implants in 2011 sparked fears worldwide, but [health officials](#) in various countries have said they were not toxic and did not increase the risk of [breast cancer](#).

More than 4,000 women have reported ruptures in the implants and in France alone 15,000 have had the [PIP implants](#) replaced.

Hundreds of the victims, as well as some 300 lawyers, attended the trial in the southern port city of Marseille, near PIP's former headquarters.

Mas, a former travelling salesman who got his start in the medical business by selling pharmaceuticals, founded PIP in 1991 to take advantage of the booming market for cosmetic implants.

He built the company into the third-largest global supplier of implants, but came under the spotlight when plastic surgeons began reporting an unusual number of ruptures in his products.

Health authorities later discovered he was saving millions of euros by allegedly using industrial-grade gel in 75 percent of the implants. PIP's implants were banned and the company eventually liquidated.

Some of the defendants, including Mas, have also been charged in separate and ongoing manslaughter and financial fraud investigations into the scandal.

The manslaughter probe is related to the suspicious 2010 death from cancer of a woman who was fitted with the implants.

PIP had exported more than 80 percent of its implants, with about half going to Latin America, about a third to other countries in western Europe, about 10 percent to eastern Europe and the rest to the Middle East and Asia.

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