ORIGINAL ARTICLE



PROSPECT: 4- and 6-year follow-up of a randomised trial of surgery for vaginal prolapse

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Received: 25 April 2022 / Accepted: 24 June 2022 / Published online: 26 August 2022 © The Author(s) 2022

Abstract

Introduction and hypothesis Our aim was to compare the mid-term results of native tissue, biological xenograft and polypropylene mesh surgery for women with vaginal wall prolapse.

Methods A total of 1348 women undergoing primary transvaginal repair of an anterior and/or posterior prolapse were recruited between January 2010 and August 2013 from 35 UK centres. They were randomised by remote allocation to native tissue surgery, biological xenograft or polypropylene mesh. We performed both 4- and 6-year follow-up using validated patient-reported outcome measures.

Results At 4 and 6 years post-operation, there was no clinically important difference in Pelvic Organ Prolapse Symptom Score for any of the treatments. Using a strict composite outcome to assess functional cure at 6 years, we found no difference in cure among the three types of surgery. Half the women were cured at 6 years but only 10.3 to 12% of women had undergone further surgery for prolapse. However, 8.4% of women in the mesh group had undergone further surgery for mesh complications. There was no difference in the incidence of chronic pain or dyspareunia between groups.

Conclusions At the mid-term outcome of 6 years, there is no benefit from augmenting primary prolapse repairs with polypropylene mesh inlays or biological xenografts. There was no evidence that polypropylene mesh inlays caused greater pain or dyspareunia than native tissue repairs.

Keywords Polypropylene mesh · Prolapse · Randomised trial · Xenograft

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Introduction

There has been concern about the long-term effectiveness of prolapse surgery and its complications, the limited available evidence suggesting failure rates of up to 50% [1, 2] and reoperation rates up to 30%, albeit this included continence surgery too. The mean time interval to the second operation was 12 years [3]. Although prolapse can affect young women, it is a disease associated with ageing. The number of adults > 65 years doubled between 1980 and 2020 [4] and the numbers globally living to become centenarians is predicted to rise by ten-fold by 2050 [5]. Hence, considering the failure rates of surgery for prolapse and the increasing ageing population, it is important to find a surgical solution with longevity and with a low complications rate.

To improve outcomes following prolapse surgery, polypropylene mesh and biological grafts have been used. However, evidence to justify these new approaches was absent, unreliable or conflicting. In 2017 the findings from PROS-PECT, a randomised controlled trial (RCT) that compared polypropylene mesh inlays, biological xenografts and native tissue surgery for vaginal prolapse in 1348 women undergoing primary prolapse surgery, showed that augmentation of a vaginal repair with polypropylene mesh inlays or biological xenograft material did not improve outcomes at 2 years [6]. In a secondary analysis of the complete cohort of women in PROSPECT (n = 2632) we found low surgical morbidity and low rates of severe complications following any prolapse surgery [7]. Nevertheless, we acknowledged that the findings in the longer term may still overturn these conclusions. Hence, mid- and long-term follow-up is needed.

Also, over the past decade anecdotal evidence has emerged suggesting that some women who received polypropylene mesh to augment their prolapse surgery experienced severe and debilitating adverse effects [8]. Some of these complications may have delayed onset. However, there is little evidence about the relative risks of these conditions occurring following mesh compared to native tissue or biological xenograft surgery.

This article reports on the mid-term follow-up, at 4 and 6 years, of women randomised within PROSPECT undergoing primary prolapse surgery.

Methods

Participants

Women undergoing primary transvaginal repair of an anterior and/or posterior prolapse were enrolled into the trial between January 2010 and August 2013 from 35 UK centres. All women provided written informed consent to participant. Baseline data, operative details, outcome data to 2-years following surgery, types of mesh and xenograft used and full methodology of the trial have been reported previously [6, 9].

Women were recruited and randomised within three strata: Stratum A included women randomised among all three treatment options: native tissue repair, polypropylene mesh inlay and biological xenograft (in a 1:1:1 ratio); Stratum B included women randomised between native tissue repair and polypropylene mesh inlay (in a 1:1 ratio); Stratum C included women randomised between native tissue repair and biological xenograft (in a 1:1 ratio).

Outcomes

In this longer-term follow-up period, women were followed up at 4 and 6 years after surgery by postal questionnaire. Those women who did not have surgery in the initial 2-year period were followed by postal questionnaire at 4 and 6 years post-randomisation.

In keeping with IUGA/ICS recommendation [10], the primary outcome was participant-reported prolapse symptoms at 6 years after surgery using the Pelvic Organ Prolapse Symptom Score (POP-SS) [11]. Secondary outcomes included prolapse-specific quality-of-life measured using a visual analogue scale (VAS), generic quality of life based on the EQ-5D-3L [12] and an assessment of overall global improvement in symptoms (PGI-I) [13]. Bladder, bowel and sexual functions were measured using validated or adapted International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaires (ICIQ) [14].

Further surgical treatment and conservative treatment for prolapse recurrence, need for mesh removal surgery and other related hospital readmission were reported by women in their postal questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

The main analysis was conducted on an intention-totreat basis (whereby women with observed outcome data remained in their allocated group for analysis). Two comparisons were made: native tissue repair versus polypropylene mesh inlay (Trial 1, data from women in Strata A and B) and native tissue repair versus biological xenograft (Trial 2, from women in Strata A and C). As the analyses were carried out for Trial 1 and Trial 2 separately, data from some women in the native repair arm from Stratum A were included in both trials. Study analyses were conducted according to a prespecified statistical analysis plan, using SAS version 16.1 (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA).

All outcome measures were presented as summaries using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation for continuous measures and proportion for ordinal and dichotomous measures) and comparisons between randomised groups were analysed separately at 4 and 6 years using generalised linear models. Models were adjusted for minimisation covariates (age; type of prolapse repair planned; need for concomitant urinary incontinence procedure or not; need for concomitant upper vaginal prolapse procedure or not; and operating surgeon), baseline measures where appropriate and randomisation stratum. Continuous outcomes were analysed using linear mixed models with surgeon fitted as a random effect. Binary outcomes models used the binomial family and log link function while the ordinal outcomes were fitted with an ordinal regression model. The binary and ordinal models were adjusted for the minimisation covariates; however, in some cases due to small or nil category combination counts, some had to be dropped. Surgeon effect was adjusted for in the binary and ordinal outcome models using a cluster robust variance, which, while not the same as a random effects model (as for the continuous outcomes), has a similar effect.

PGI-I was analysed using ordinal logistic regression (proportional odds models with cumulative logits). Dichotomous outcomes were analysed using logbinomial regression. Estimates of treatment effect size were mean differences in the linear mixed models (including the analysis of the POP-SS), odds ratios in the ordinal models and risk ratios in the binary models. For all estimates, 95% confidence intervals were calculated.

Definition of functional cure

Functional cure, at 6 years, was defined as a composite outcome, including all women who had not had a reintervention for prolapse during this follow-up period (surgery or pessary) and all women who answered "Never" to question 1 on the POP-SS ('How often in the last 4 weeks have you had a feeling of something coming down from or in your vagina') at 6 years.

Results

Participants and treatment

We randomised 1348 women from January 2010 to August 2013. Of the women randomised, 23 participants did not consent to be contacted for longer-term follow-up and 42 withdrew their consent from completing further questionnaires. These women were therefore excluded from the long-term follow-up study and did not receive the 4- and 6-year postal questionnaires.

Figure 1 (Consort Diagram the flow of women through the study at 4 and 6 years. The retention rates of those initially randomised remain high (72% at 4 years and 65% at 6 years), with no significant differential in drop-our rates. The baseline characteristics of responders and non-responders at 4 and 6 years are given in supplementary Table 1. Nonresponders tended to be younger and have higher (worse) POP-SS scores at baseline, with lower (worse) EQ-5D-3L scores. However, other clinical characteristics were broadly similar and there was no difference in follow-up rates between randomised groups.

Primary outcome

At 4 and 6 years, the mean POP-SS in the group randomised to a native tissue repair was lower (better) than those in the polypropylene mesh inlay or biological xenograft group (Table 1). The difference was only statistically significant for the polypropylene mesh inlay comparison to native tissue at 4 years, although the mean difference (MD) was small and less than the minimal clinically important difference (MCID) for the POP-SS at 4 and 6 years respectively (1.01 [95% CI 0.20–1.83], 0.85 [-0.05–1.75]).

There were no statistically significant differences in the number of women with at least one symptom of prolapse (defined as POP-SS > 0) or in quality-of-life related to prolapse symptoms.

Other outcomes

Primary symptom of prolapse (something coming down [SCD])

There was no difference between groups in the number of women experiencing any degree of "something coming down" (Table 1). However, at 6 years, there appeared to be more women in the polypropylene mesh inlay group experiencing symptoms of SCD "frequently" compared to the native tissue group. This was not found in the biological xenograft group (Supplementary table 2).

Other pelvic floor symptoms

No significant statistical difference was found in the frequency of severe incontinence or faecal incontinence after surgery. All these symptoms improved compared to baseline rates. Dyspareunia rates fell across all groups (Table 1).

Functional cure (Table 2)

Using a composite outcome assessing functional cure at 6 years we found no difference in cure among the three types of surgery. Half the women were cured at 6 years but only 10.3 to 12% of women had undergone further surgery for prolapse. Some women will have had more than one further operation for prolapse by 6 years.

Complications and adverse events

Over the 6-year period, further surgery to treat complications of the polypropylene mesh inlay was required by 8.4%of women in the mesh group, 0.9% of those in the native tissue group and 1.6% of those in the biological xenograft group.

There was little difference between the arms in overall quality of life assessed using the EQ-5D-3L (Table 3). There was no significant difference between groups, in the number of women reporting generalised extreme pain or discomfort, which was assessed as part of EQ-5D-3L.

Fig. 1 CONSORT diagram

	Native tissue V mesh	al 1: / Polypropylene 1 inlay 65	Native tissue xenc	al 2: e V Biological ograft 35
	Native tissue 430	Mesh inlay 435	Native tissue 367	Biological xenograft 368
Did not consent to long term follow-up ¹	5 (1.2%)	7 (1.6%)	7 (1.9%)	5 (1.4%)
Withdrew before long-term follow-up ²	15 (3.5%)	15 (3.4%)	13 (3.5%)	9 (2.4%)
Died before long-term follow-up ³	3 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.3%)
INCLUDED IN LONG-TERM FOLLOW-UP	407 (94.7%)	413 (94.9%)	345 (94.0%)	353 (95.9%)
4-year follow-up				
Responded to 4-year questionnaire	305 (70.9%)	314 (72.2%)	271 (73.8%)	268 (72.8%)
Withdrawal within 4 years	21 (4.9%)	18 (4.1%)	15 (4.1%)	13 (3.5%)
Deaths within 4 years	9 (2.1%)	1 (0.2%)	6 (1.6%)	3 (0.8%)
6-year follow-up				
Responded to 6-year questionnaire	272 (63.3%)	277 (63.7%)	238 (64.9%)	250 (67.9%)
Withdrawal within 6 years	30 (7.0%)	24 (5.5%)	23 (6.3%)	16 (4.3%)
Deaths within 6 years	16 (3.7%)	13 (3.0%)	15 (4.1%)	6 (1.6%)

- During the initial informed consent process, 12 women in Trial 1 and 12 women in Trial 2 did not consent to be 'contacted in the future for long term follow-up' and therefore did not receive the 4 or 6-year questionnaires
- 2. Includes women who withdrew from completing postal questionnaires during the initial 2-year period and therefore did not receive the 4 or 6-year questionnaires. Includes women who had surgery in the initial 2-year period and who were included in the 2-year analysis (30 women across Trial 1 and Trial 2) and women who did not have surgery in the initial 2-year period and who were not included in the 2-year analysis (12 women across Trial 1 and Trial 2).
- 3. During the initial 2-year follow-up period, 3 women in Trial 1 and 3 women in Trial 2 were reported as deceased and therefore did not receive the 4 or 6-year questionnaires

Patient's global impression of improvement and satisfaction (Table 4) and further treatment (Table 5)

Dicussion

Native tissue vs polypropylene mesh inlay

At 4 years there was no difference found in women's perceptions of improvement in prolapse symptoms. However, those who had undergone a native tissue repair were significantly more satisfied with the overall outcome of their surgery. By 6 years, significantly more of the native tissue group felt their symptoms were very much better and they were overall more satisfied with the outcome of their operation than the polypropylene mesh inlay group.

Native tissue vs biological xenograft

At 4 years following surgery the native tissue group were both more satisfied and perceived the prolapse symptoms were better than the biological xenograft graft group. However, by 6 years there was no difference in prolapse symptoms or overall satisfaction.

Table 5 demonstrates there were no significant difference in further treatment rates for prolapse or SUI.

Main findings

At 6 years following surgery for vaginal wall prolapse, our study found no clinical or statistically significant difference in the trial's primary outcome, POP-SS score.

The overall cure rate at 6 years, a composite of no symptoms of SCD, no use of pessaries and no further surgery for prolapse, was approximately 50% for all methods.

We found no difference in rates of "generic pain" or dyspareunia, both of which were low. In addition, the was no difference in overall quality of life between groups

We also found no difference in any of the outcomes commonly used to assess prolapse surgery among the three methods of prolapse repair (native tissue, polypropylene mesh inlay or a biological xenograft) except for PGI-I, global satisfaction and SCD 'frequently', although not consistently over the different time points (Table 4).

1, 2, 4 and 6 years
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oowel and dyspareunia symptoms at 1
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Prolapse urinary,
Table 1

Matching											Horocraft								
value Nai wite tissue Biological Xenografi Eff. size 95% Cl 86 5.5 (5.6) 342 5.6 (3.6) 337 0.06 -071 to 033 86 5.5 (5.6) 342 5.6 (3.7) 0.30 0.03 to 105 86 82.7% 233 342 81.9% 2.70 0.30 0.03 to 105 86 82.7% 233 342 (5.1) 330 0.13 -0.30 to 0.56 98 12.0 233 24 2.9 0.09 0.01 to 105 198 12.7% 243 246 2.9 0.01 to 17 0.04 to 0.05 198 12.6 25 20 2.0 0.07 0.01 to 106 198 10.6 58 2.4 2.0 0.06 0.01 to 106 101 10 0.2 20 2.9 0.09 0.01 to 106 101 10 10 10 10 0.01 to 106 0.01 to 106											venugran								
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553 82.7% 283 342 81.9% 276 337 0.99 0.0310.05 499 2.2 (2.8) 335 2.4 (2.9) 330 0.13 0.3010.05 734 4.9 (5.1) 298 82.0% 240 300 0.57 0.3010.05 734 4.9 (5.1) 298 82.0% 240 300 0.57 0.3010.13 734 81.2% 2.42 2.98 82.0% 246 300 1.017 0.9410.108 735 5.3 (5.2) 209 2.11 (2.9) 301 0.310.139 736 5.3 (5.2) 206 5.8 (5.2) 206 0.310.136 731 201 1 2.9 2.1 (2.8) 2.2 0.310.136 731 2.1 2.2 2.6 5.8 (5.2) 2.6 0.310.136 731 2.1 2.1 2.2 2.6 0.3 0.310.136 0.310.136 731 2.1 2.1 2.6 2.4 2.3	Other measures of prolapse symptoms at 1 yea	ц																	
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N = 299 N = 301 218 4.9 (5.1) 298 5.6 (5.7) 300 0.57 -0.021 to 1.35 194 81.2% 242 298 82.0% 246 300 1.01 71 0.944 to 108 435 2.0 (2.5) 290 2.1 (2.5) 290 1.01 71 0.944 to 108 435 2.0 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.2) 266 0.51 0.01 10.1 0.944 to 136 78 5.3 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.5) 266 0.54 0.52 0.01 0.01 0.51 0.944 to 136 78 5.3 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.2) 267 0.54 0.91 to 106 71 2.16 2.56 8.5% 2.24 2.56 0.91 to 106 705 5.5% 14 0.92 2.54 1.02 0.91 to 106 705 5.5% 14 2.58 2.45	2-Year outcomes																		
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194 81.2% 242 298 82.0% 246 300 101 0.94 to 108 435 20 (2.5) 290 2.1 (2.8) 292 0.09 -0.34 to 0.51 015 5.3 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.5) 266 9.9 0.91 to 1.06 726 84.2% 224 266 3.8 2.9 0.99 0.91 to 1.06 721 2.1 (2.6) 266 41.6% 109 262 115 0.91 to 1.06 721 2.1 (2.6) 266 41.6% 109 262 115 0.91 to 1.06 731 2.1 (2.6) 266 41.6% 109 262 115 0.91 to 1.06 731 2.1 (2.9) 2.6 2.4 2.8 0.19 0.05 to 1.03 833 5.5% 14 2.56 8.3% 2.1 2.8 0.91 to 1.06 7 6.7% 17 2.3 2.4 2.3 0.01 0.02 to 1.06 83 5.9% 5 115	POP-SS at 2 years	4.9	(5.1)	347	5.3	(5.1)	342	0.38	-0.31 to 1.08	0.278	4.9	(5.1)	298	5.6	(5.7)	300	0.57	-0.22 to 1.35	0.159
435 2.0 (2.5) 290 2.1 (2.8) 292 0.09 -0.34 to 0.51 11 N=271 N=268 N=268 (5.3) 262 0.54 -0.31 to 1.39 736 84.2% 234 258 (5.5) 262 0.58 0.91 to 1.06 731 2.1 (2.6) 266 81.6% 109 262 1.15 0.91 to 1.06 731 2.1 (2.6) 266 41.6% 109 262 0.13 0.91 to 1.06 733 55% 14 256 8.3% 224 253 0.115 0.91 to 0.56 731 50% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.31 731 50% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.103.00 731 50% 5 101 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.103.00 701 85 7 10 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.103.00 85 6.3% 5.3 1.3% 0.81 0.74	Symptomatic ¹	81.6%	283	347	85.1%	291	342	1.04	0.98 to 1.11	0.194	81.2%	242	298	82.0%	246	300	1.01 [7]	0.94 to 1.08	0.756
N = 271 N = 268 015 5.3 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.5) 262 0.54 -0.31 to 1.39 726 84.2% 224 266 85.5% 224 262 0.98 0.91 to 1.06 121 2.1 (2.6) 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.91 to 0.59 813 55% 14 256 24 (2.8) 258 0.13 0.91 to 0.59 833 55% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 1.37 0.81 to 2.31 657 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.31 656 5.9 5.9 15 0.81 0.24 to 0.18 611 85.7% 5 10 4.3% 0.81 to 2.30 611 85.7% 233 266 (5.8) 0.81 to 2.31 611 85 24 1.3 0.81 to 2.31 0.92 to 1.30 611 85.7% 233	Prolapse-related QoL score ²	1.9	(2.5)	335	2.2	(2.6)	329	0.15	-0.23 to 0.54	0.435	2.0	(2.5)	290	2.1	(2.8)	292	0.09	-0.34 to 0.51	0.691
N = 271 N = 268 015 5.3 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.5) 262 0.54 -0.31 to 1.39 726 84.2% 224 266 85.5% 224 26 0.91 to 1.06 121 2.1 (2.6) 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.91 to 1.06 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.91 to 0.35 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.91 to 0.35 35.9 5.5% 17 29 27.7% 19 264 0.51.53 35.9 5.5% 17 19 265 0.13 0.21 to 3.00 31 5.0% 5.3 2.15 0.9 0.91 to 0.05 0.05 to 1.54 31 5.0% 5.9 5.9 0.15 2.15 0.81 to 2.10 0.05 to 1.05 31 5.0% 5.9 15.5 0.81 0.24 0.21 to 3.00	4-Year outcomes																		
015 5.3 (5.2) 266 5.8 (5.5) 262 0.34 0.31 to 1.39 726 84.2% 224 266 85.5% 224 262 0.98 0.91 to 1.06 121 2.1 (2.0) 260 2.4 (2.8) 258 0.13 0.34 to 0.59 819 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.91 to 1.35 833 5.5% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 1.37 0.81 to 2.31 935 5.5% 17 19 264 1.6% 0.9 264 1.6% 931 5.0% 5.1 10 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.31 931 5.0% 5.9 1.15 0.81 0.21 to 3.00 931 5.0% 5.9 5.9 0.51 0.51 to 3.00 931 5.9 5.9 5.9 0.15 0.21 to 3.00 932 5.9 5.9 5.9 0.13 0.22 to 3.00 933 5.9 5.9 5.9 0.14 0.02 to 1.05 934 10.5 2.4 10.6 2.4 1.13 0.02 to 1.05 935	No. of women at 4 years	N = 305			N = 314						N = 271			N = 268					
726 84.2% 224 266 85.5% 224 262 0.98 0.91 to 1.06 121 2.1 (2.6) 260 2.4 (2.8) 258 0.13 -0.34 to 0.59 819 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.97 to 1.35 833 5.5% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 0.97 to 1.35 833 5.5% 17 233 1.37 0.81 to 2.31 0.97 to 1.35 833 5.5% 17 23 1.37 0.81 to 2.31 0.91 to 1.06 831 5.0 (5.4) 2.33 2.1 2.4 0.91 0.64 to 1.18 857 5.9 (5.4) 2.37 (5.8) 2.48 0.93 0.02 to 1.06 66 15 2.37 6.3 2.48 0.93 0.93 to 0.05 0.05 to 1.05 66 15 2.42 106 2.34 0.14 0.03 to 1.05 0.05 to 1.05 66 15 2.33 2.42 106 2.34 0.14	POP-SS at 4 years	5.1	(5.0)	297	6.1	(6.0)	311	1.01	0.20 to 1.83	0.015	5.3	(5.2)	266	5.8	(5.5)	262	0.54	-0.31 to 1.39	0.212
726 84.2% 224 266 85.5% 224 262 0.91 to 1.06 121 2.1 (2.6) 260 2.4 (2.8) 238 0.13 0.91 to 1.06 819 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.97 to 1.35 833 5.5% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 0.97 to 1.35 937 6.7% 17 233 217 253 1.37 081 to 2.31 931 5.0% 6.7% 19 2.48 109 0.65 to 1.54 931 5.0% 6.3 7.7% 19 248 10.0 0.22 to 3.00 931 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.91 0.02 to 1.06 935 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.91 0.03 to 1.05 935 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.91 0.02 to 1.05 936 95% 24 2.13 248 0.91	Other measures of prolapse symptoms at 4 yea	ITS																	
121 2.1 (2.6) 260 2.4 (2.8) 258 0.13 $0.34 \text{ to } 0.59$ 819 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 $0.97 \text{ to } 1.35$ 833 5.5% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 1.37 $0.81 \text{ to } 2.31$ 057 67% 17 253 7.7% 19 248 100 $0.65 \text{ to } 1.54$ 051 5.0% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 $0.22 \text{ to } 3.00$ 051 5.0% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 $0.22 \text{ to } 3.00$ 051 5.0% 5.9 (5.4) 2.37 6.5 (5.8) 2.48 0.27 $0.64 \text{ to } 1.18$ 052 5.9 (5.4) 2.37 6.5 (5.8) 2.48 0.27 $0.64 \text{ to } 1.18$ 057 2.9 (5.4) 2.37 6.5 (5.8) 2.48 0.98 $0.92 \text{ to } 1.05$ 057 2.9 2.37 85.9% 2.13 2.48 0.14 $0.92 \text{ to } 1.05$ 057 2.6 0.30 2.43 0.14 $0.38 \text{ to } 0.52$ $0.92 \text{ to } 1.05$ 056 15 2.28 2.9% 2.13 2.42 0.91 $0.38 \text{ to } 0.53$ 056 0.5% 2.12 2.9% 0.91 0.14 $0.38 \text{ to } 0.52$ 056 0.5% 2.22 8.9% 0.21 0.91 $0.13 \text{ to } 2.$	Symptomatic ¹	84.8%	252	297	85.2%	265	311	0.99	0.93 to 1.05	0.726	84.2%	224	266	85.5%	224	262	0.98	0.91 to 1.06	0.580
819 35.7% 95 266 41.6% 109 262 1.15 0.97 to 1.35 833 5.5% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 1.37 0.81 to 2.31 057 6.7% 17 253 7.7% 19 248 1.00 91 0.65 to 1.54 731 5.0% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 0.22 to 3.00 835 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.27 -0.64 to 1.18 857% 203 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.97 0.02 to 1.05 163 40.5% 203 237 0.54 0.14 0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 15 2.03 23 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 0.38 to 0.65 165 9.5% 213 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 165 9.5% 213 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 165 9.5% 213 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 165 9.5% 213 243 0.14 0.38 to 0.53 to 1.38 17 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 166 9.5% 21 222 8.9% 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal)	Prolapse-related QoL score ²	2.1	(2.7)	290	2.4	(2.9)	310	0.35	-0.09 to 0.79	0.121	2.1	(2.6)	260	2.4	(2.8)	258	0.13	-0.34 to 0.59	0.593
53 5.5% 14 256 8.3% 21 253 1.37 0.81 to 2.31 657 6.7% 17 253 7.7% 19 248 1.00 [9] 0.65 to 1.54 731 5.0% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 to 2.31 0.50 63 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 1.00 [9] 0.65 to 1.16 663 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.21 to 3.00 571 85.9% 213 248 0.14 0.38 to 0.65 0.92 to 1.05 667 15 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 0.38 to 0.65 165 96 237 42.7% 106 238 1.36 0.31 to 2.36 165 96 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 0.38 to 0.65 166 97 233 2.6 2.38 1.36 0.36 to 1.36 238 to 0.65 167 97 105 237 0.86 0.73 to 2.36	Women with any report of SCD 3	35.4%	105	297	37.9%	118	311	1.02	0.85 to 1.23	0.819	35.7%	95	266	41.6%	109	262	1.15	0.97 to 1.35	0.100
057 6.7% 17 233 7.7% 19 248 1.00 [9] 0.65 to 1.54 731 5.0% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 0.22 to 3.00 063 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.21 to 3.00 063 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.21 to 3.00 051 85.9% 213 248 0.24 0.92 to 1.05 297 24 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 055 40.5% 96 233 2.6 (3.0) 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 165 40.5% 21 223 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.14.0 131 3.9% 3 7 105 0.91 0.18 to 4.57	Severe incontinence ⁴	5.7%	17	296	5.3%	16	303	0.83	0.43 to 1.60	0.583	5.5%	14	256	8.3%	21	253	1.37	0.81 to 2.31	0.247
731 5.0% 5 100 4.3% 5 115 0.81 0.22 to 3.00 063 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.27 -0.64 to 1.18 671 85.7% 203 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.92 to 1.05 297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 0.92 to 1.05 165 40.5% 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 0.92 to 1.05 165 40.5% 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 0.92 to 1.05 165 40.5% 23 2.6 (3.0) 2.48 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 165 96 233 2.6 (3.0) 2.48 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 166 95% 21 222 238 1.36 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.18 to 4.57 217 3.9% 3 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57	Severe faecal incontinence ⁵	7.5%	22	292	9.0%	27	299	1.47 [8]	0.99 to 2.19	0.057	6.7%	17	253	7.7%	19	248	1.00[9]	0.65 to 1.54	0.994
N = 238 N = 250 663 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.27 -0.64 to 1.18 671 85.7% 203 237 85.9% 213 248 0.98 0.92 to 1.05 297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 96 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 1.13 0.92 to 1.05 165 40.5% 96 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 21 22 238 1.36 0.92 to 1.40 166 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.73 to 2.52 17 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.18 to 4.57 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a vistal analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (agreat deal)	Dyspareunia ⁶	5.6%	7	126	4.2%	5	119	0.80	0.21 to 2.95	0.731	5.0%	5	100	4.3%	5	115	0.81	0.22 to 3.00	0.756
N = 238 N = 250 063 5.9 (5.4) 237 6.2 (5.8) 248 0.27 -0.64 to 1.18 671 85.7% 203 237 85.9% 213 248 0.92 to 1.05 297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 96 237 42.7% 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.40 067 66% 15 226 9.2% 21 237 0.86 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.51 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) 0.18 are deal) 0.10 are deal)	6-Year outcomes																		
063 5.9 (5.4) 2.37 (6.2) (5.8) 248 0.27 -0.64 to 1.18 671 85.7% 203 237 85.9% 213 248 0.92 to 1.05 297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 96 237 42.7% 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.40 067 6.6% 15 226 9.2% 21 237 0.66 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 7 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) 0.18 are deal) 0.10 (a great deal)	No. of women at 6 years	N = 272			N = 277						N = 238			N = 250					
671 85.7% 203 237 85.9% 213 248 0.98 0.92 to 1.05 297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 96 237 42.7% 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.40 067 6.6% 15 226 9.2% 22 238 1.36 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.51 to 1.80 0.51 to 1.80 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) 0.10 agreat deal) 0.10 agreat deal)	POP_SS at 6 years	5.4	(5.4)	269	6.3	(6.2)	272	0.85	-0.05 to 1.75	0.063	5.9	(5.4)	237	6.2	(5.8)	248	0.27	-0.64 to 1.18	0.565
671 85.7% 203 237 85.9% 213 248 0.98 0.92 to 1.05 297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 96 237 42.7% 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.40 067 6.6% 15 226 9.2% 21 237 0.86 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.51 to 1.80 0.51 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) 0.18 are deal)	Other measures of prolapse symptoms at 6 yea	urs																	
297 2.4 (2.8) 233 2.6 (3.0) 243 0.14 -0.38 to 0.65 165 40.5% 96 237 42.7% 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.40 067 6.6% 15 226 9.2% 22 238 1.36 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal)	Symptomatic ¹	83.3%	224	269	85.3%	232	272	1.02	0.95 to 1.09	0.671	85.7%	203	237	85.9%	213	248	0.98	0.92 to 1.05	0.642
165 40.5% 96 237 42.7% 106 248 1.13 0.92 to 1.40 067 66% 15 226 9.2% 22 238 1.36 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal)	Prolapse-related QoL score ²	2.3	(2.7)	264	2.5	(3.0)	264	0.26	-0.22 to 0.74	0.297	2.4	(2.8)	233	2.6	(3.0)	243	0.14	-0.38 to 0.65	0.605
067 6.6% 15 226 9.2% 22 238 1.36 0.73 to 2.52 186 9.5% 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal)	Women with any report of SCD ³	37.2%	100	269	40.8%	111	272	1.13	0.95 to 1.33	0.165	40.5%	96	237	42.7%	106	248	1.13	0.92 to 1.40	0.251
186 9.5% 21 222 8.9% 21 237 0.86 0.53 to 1.38 217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal)	Severe urinary incontinence ⁴	6.8%	18	264	10.9%	29	267	1.58	0.97 to 2.59	0.067	6.6%	15	226	9.2%	22	238	1.36	0.73 to 2.52	0.333
217 3.9% 3 76 6.9% 7 102 0.91 0.18 to 4.57 day life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal)	Severe faecal incontinence ⁵	9.3%	24	259	6.8%	18	266	0.73	0.45 to 1.17	0.186	9.5%	21	222	8.9%	21	237	0.86	0.53 to 1.38	0.523
Footnotes: Symptomatic = POP-SS > 0 Prolapse symptoms measured as 'overall interference of prolapse symptoms with everyday life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) Women with any report of SCD = 'A feeling of something coming down from or in your vagina?' (any = occasionally or more) 	Dyspareunia ⁶	4.3%	4	93	5.7%	9	105	1.88	0.69 to 5.10	0.217	3.9%	ŝ	76	6.9%	٢	102	0.91	0.18 to 4.57	0.910
 Symptomatic = POP-SS > 0 Prolapse symptoms measured as 'overall interference of prolapse symptoms with everyday life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) Women with any report of SCD = 'A feeling of something coming down from or in your vagina?' (any = occasionally or more) 	Footnotes:																		
2. Prolapse-related QoL score = quality of life due to prolapse symptoms measured as 'overall interference of prolapse symptoms with everyday life' using a visual analogue scale (VAS); score range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal) 3. Women with any report of SCD = 'A feeling of something coming down from or in your vagina?' (any = occasionally or more)	1. Symptomatic = $POP-SS > 0$																		
3. Women with any report of SCD = 'A feeling of something coming down from or in your vagina?' (any = α casionally or more)	2. Prolapse-related OoL score = quality of $\frac{1}{2}$	life due to prola	pse sym	ptoms n	neasured as '	overall in	erferenc	ce of prolapse	symptoms with	everyday life	i' using a visua	l analogu	e scale	(VAS); score	range froi	m 0 (not	t at all) to 10	(a great deal)	
	3. Women with any report of SCD \equiv 'A fee	Jing of somethi	ne comi	no dowr	1 from or in v	zour vagir	a?' (anv	$i = \alpha c casions$	J v nore)	•	6)))	
			ung coun	Mon Sm		your vagu	, (au												

5. Severe faccal incontinence = Faecal incontinence of solid or liquid stool: 'Do stools (facces, motion) leak at inappropriate time or place, or before you can get to the toilet?' (severe = sometimes, most or all of the time)

6. Concomitant upper prolapse procedure and symptoms at baseline excluded due to nil group counts

7. Type of prolapse planned, concornitant upper prolapse procedure and symptoms at baseline excluded due to nil group counts

8. Concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded because of nil group counts

9. Concomitant incontinence and concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded because of nil group counts

						<u> </u>		•							0	0		
		Native tissue	ssue	Mesh	esh inlay		Eff. size	95% CI		p-value	Native tissue	ne	Biolo graft	Biological xeno- graft	eno-	Eff. size	• 95% CI	p-value
6-Year outcomes																		
No. of women at 6 years		N = 272		N = 277	LL					1	N = 238		Z	N = 250				
Cured-no feeling of something coming down at 6 years, no prolapse surgery by 6 years, no pessary use at 6 years	ing coming se surgery at 6 years	53.7%	144 268	268 54.7%		150 274	274 1.02 [1] 0.88 to 1.19	0.88 to		0.797	51.5%	120 2	233 49.4%		122 247	247 0.99	0.83 to 1.18 0.892	0.892
Number of women having any new prolapse operation within 6 years (cumulative)	ny new 6 years	12.0%	32	266 10.3%	28	271	0.87	0.54 to 1.40		0.572 1	11.7%	27 2	231 11.8%	8% 29	9 245	5 1.00	0.61 to 1.63	0.995
Number of women having any mesh removed within 6 years (cumulative)	ny mesh umulative)	1.6%	4	255 8.4%	22	263	5.24	1.84 to	1.84 to 14.96 0.002		1.4%	3	221 0.9%	% 2	231	1 0.59	0.10 to 3.48	0.562
	Trial 1: Nat	ive tissue 1	repair	Trial 1: Native tissue repair vs Polypropylene mesh inlay	ylene n	nesh inl:	010	5	-		Trial 2: Native tissue repair vs biological xenograft	ssue rel	pair vs t	biological	xenog	raft ·	10 220	-
	Native tissue	e	Mes	Mesh inlay		Eff. size	95%	CI	p-value	Native tissue	tissue		Biologi	Biological xenograft	graft	Eff. size	95% CI	p-value
4-Year outcomes No. of women at 4 vears	N = 305		 Z	N = 314						N = 271	-		N = 268	~				
EQ5D 3L		(0.27) 298		2 (0.23)	() 297	0.02	-0.02	-0.02 to 0.05	0.288	0.80	(0.27)	265	0.82	(0.26)) 262	0.02	-0.01 to 0.06	0.221
Pain/discomfort (extreme) 6-Year outcomes	7.3 2	22 300	0 4.5	14	311	0.76 [1]		0.47 to 1.21	0.244	7.5	20	267	5.3	14	0	0.57	0.30 to 1.07	0.081
No. of women at 6 years	N = 272		Ш И	N = 277						N = 238	8		N = 250	0				
EQ5D 3L	0.80 ((0.27) 263	3 0.81	1 (0.23)) 271	-0.00		-0.04 to 0.04	0.903	0.80	(0.27)	229	0.80	(0.25)) 244	0.01	-0.03 to 0.05	0.548
Pain/discomfort (extreme)	6.3 1	17 270	0.4.0	11	275	0.60 [1]		0.25 to 1.45	0.255	5.9	14	236	6.0	15	0	0.61 [2]	0.38 to 0.97	0.038

1. Concomitant incontinence procedure and concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded due to nil group counts

2. Age band, type of prolapse planned, concomitant incontinence procedure and concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded because of nil group counts

Table 4 Satisfaction with surgery at 4 and 6 years Trial 1: Marine ficence	Trial 1. N	4 and 6	years	urgery at 4 and 6 years Trial 1 • Native tiscue renoir ve notvorronvlene mech inlav	- Incord	oem en	velni d		Trial 2.	Trial 2. Native ticcue renair ve hiological venorafi	Le reno	r ve hi	av levinole	flernor	_			
	Native tissue	sue		Mesh inlay	y y	Eff. size	ze	95% CI	p-	Native tissue	ue repa	Biolog	Biological xenograft	graft		Eff. size	95% CI	-d
									value									value
4-Year outcomes																		
No. of women at 4 years	N = 305			N = 314						N = 271			N = 268					
Prolapse compared with before surgery at 4 years	before surge	ry at 4	years															
Very much better	50.4%	143	284	47.4%	135	285	1.22	0.94 to 1.58	0.129	51.6%	132	256	44.4%	111	250 1	1.46	1.14 to 1.87	0.003
Much better	28.2%	80	284	26.7%	76	285				25.0%	64	256	20.8%	52	250			
A little better	10.2%	29	284	9.8%	28	285				11.3%	29	256	14.8%	37	250			
No change	4.2%	12	284	6.0%	17	285				4.3%	11	256	12.0%	30	250			
A little worse	2.8%	8	284	3.5%	10	285				3.9%	10	256	6.8%	17	250			
Much worse	2.8%	8	284	4.2%	12	285				3.1%	8	256	0.8%	7	250			
Very much worse	1.4%	4	284	2.5%	٢	285				0.8%	7	256	0.4%	1	250			
Satisfaction with surgery at 4 years	at 4 years																	
Completely satisfied	58.2%	167	287	51.5%	151	293	1.37	1.04 to 1.80	0.023	59.1%	152	257	47.5%	121	255 1	1.58	1.16 to 2.15	0.004
Fairly satisfied	28.9%	83	287	30.7%	90	293				28.0%	72	257	32.5%	83	255			
Fairly dissatisfied	4.2%	12	287	5.5%	16	293				4.7%	12	257	8.6%	22	255			
Very dissatisfied	5.9%	17	287	9.2%	27	293				5.1%	13	257	6.3%	16	255			
Not sure	2.8%	8	287	3.1%	6	293				3.1%	8	257	5.1%	13	255			
Recommend to a friend at 4 years	it 4 years																	
Yes	90.3%	250	277	87.9%	239	272	0.98[1]	0.92 to 1.03	0.430	91.1%	225	247	87.6%	212	242 0	0.95	0.91 to 0.98	0.003
6-Year outcomes															_	[2]		
No of women at 6 years $N = 272$	N = 272			LLC = N						N = 238			N = 250					
Declares commend with hefers current at 6 years	and a clark	ny at 6	0.0001															
	AC TOT	110 110	5 m c	11 007		370	1 1 1	70 1 -7 20 1	2100	200 24	100	100		00		20	0.07 1 - 1.00	0 1 1 0
very mucn better Much hetter	40./% 30.6%	78	CC7	41.9% 27.2%	111	C07	1.41	1.07 10 1.80	0.010	45.2% 29.4%	100	177	31.0% 29.9%	88 70	234	1.30	86.1 01 66.0	0.113
A little better	9.0%	23	255	8.7%	23	265				10.4%	23	221	12.8%	30	234			
No change	6.3%	16	255	8.7%	23	265				6.8%	15	221	8.1%	19	234			
A little worse	4.3%	11	255	7.2%	19	265				4.5%	10	221	6.4%	15	234			
Much worse	2.0%	5	255	2.6%	٢	265				1.8%	4	221	3.8%	6	234			
Very much worse	1.2%	б	255	3.8%	10	265				1.8%	4	221	1.3%	ю	234			
Satisfaction with surgery at 6 years	at 6 years																	
Completely satisfied	55.4%	144	260	42.9%	115	268	1.67	1.31 to 2.13	0.000	54.8%	125	228	46.2%	108	234 1	1.26	0.85 to 1.87	0.255
Fairly satisfied	30.4%	79	260	35.4%	95	268				29.4%	67	228	35.0%	82	234			
Fairly dissatisfied	3.1%	×	260	8.6%	23	268				3.1%	٢	228	8.5%	20	234			
Very dissatisfied	5.8%	15	260	8.6%	23	268				5.3%	12	228	6.4%	15	234			
Not sure	5.4%	14	260	4.5%	12	268				7.5%	17	228	3.8%	6	234			

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	Trial 1: Nat	ive tissı	ıe repa	Trial 1: Native tissue repair vs polypropylene mesh inlay	pylene	mesh i	nlay		Trial 2:	Trial 2: Native tissue repair vs biological xenograft	ue repa	ir vs bi	ological xer	nograft				
	Native tissue	e		Mesh inlay	Э	Eff. size		95% CI	p- value	p- Native tissue Biological xenograft value	sue	Biolog	gical xenog	raft	ш	Eff. size 95% CI	95% CI	p- value
Recommend to a friend at 6 years Yes 89.0%		219 246 84.8%	346 8		217 25	56 0.	93[3]	256 0.93[3] 0.90 to 0.98 0.002 89.7%	0.002	89.7%	192	214	192 214 85.2%	184	216 0.95 [2]	0.95 [2]	0.90 to 1.01	0.084
Footnotes:																		
1. Concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded because of nil group counts	olapse procedu	tre excli	d babr	scause of nil	group	counts												
2. Type of prolapse planned, concomitant incontinence and concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded because of nil group counts	ned, concomit:	ant inco	ntinenc	te and conco	mitant	npper I	prolapse	procedure exc	luded be	ecause of ni	l group	counts						
3. Concomitant incontinence and concomitant upper prolapse procedure excluded because of nil group counts	ence and conce	omitant	upper	prolapse pro	cedure	exclude	ed becai	use of nil grou	p counts									

Meaning of the study

It appears neither polypropylene mesh inlays nor biological xenografts offer any additional benefit to the outcome of prolapse surgery at 4–6 years.

At this mid-term point, women having polypropylene mesh inlays possibly appear to have slightly worse outcomes compared to those having native tissue repairs. They appear to have a higher incidence of "SCD frequently" and higher overall dissatisfaction. Their general dissatisfaction could be influenced by the negative publicity surrounding polypropylene mesh or the 8.4% who required mesh excision surgery. Other studies in which women have been examined, although small and underpowered, found a higher incidence of prolapse in the non-operated compartment in the polypropylene mesh group compared to the native tissue group [1, 2]. Another important factor of note is that the slightly increased general dissatisfaction in the polypropylene mesh inlay group does not appear to be due to any difference in the incidence of pain, dyspareunia or worse quality of life between polypropylene mesh inlays and native tissue repairs.

Pelvic organ prolapse is a very complex problem to assess because of variations in: the incidence and treatment in the three compartments of the vagina, the high long-term recurrence rate, the undefined variation in individual surgical techniques, lack of consistency in the examination techniques, especially the force exerted on the pelvic floor during examination, and the large range of pelvic floor symptoms, which may or may not be caused by the prolapse. Hence at present, large multicentre RCTs addressing global treatment and using validated patient-reported outcomes (PROMs) are probably the most useful trial designs to compare treatments. These studies should produce the most robust, generalisable and least biased information, although their limitation is that they fail to explain the pathophysiology of recurrent prolapse.

Controversy remains about the best outcome measure for pelvic organ prolapse surgery and how to define cure. Success varies depending on the outcome chosen. PGI-I is useful to capture a global overview but does not help to identify the reasons for failure. It is simple to administer and used commonly by many studies. Is the selection of "much better" on PGI-I equivalent to cure ? Or is "SCD never" a more appropriate definition of cure? Repeat operation rates should probably not be used to define success as there are many factors which may prevent women from seeking further surgery. Satisfaction may be influenced by many factors including pre-operative counselling. Again, this highlights the strength of our large RCT in directly comparing these outcomes.

Trials need to be large enough to account for the significant long-term follow-up issues which will occur not only from trial fatigue but also from the increasing frailty and mortality of an ageing population.

	Trial 1: I	Vative	tissue r	Trial 1: Native tissue repair vs polypropylene mesh inlay	lyprop	ylene n	aesh inlay			Trial 2: I	Native	tissue n	Trial 2: Native tissue repair vs biological xenograft	iologic	al xeno	graft		
	Native tissue	ssue		Mesh inlay	ay		Eff. size	95% CI	p-value	Native tissue	ssue		Biological xenograft	al xeno	graft	Eff. size	95% CI	p-value
4-Year outcomes																		
No. of women at 4 years	N=305			N=314						N=271			N=268					
New prolapse operation ¹	4.0%	12	299	2.9%	6	311	0.76	0.36 to 1.61	0.471	3.0%	8	264	4.5%	12	266	1.44	0.77 to 2.67	0.253
Continence surgery	2.0%	9	300	0.7%	2	307	0.35	0.07 to 1.75	0.202	1.1%	б	268	0.4%	1	267	0.31	0.03 to 3.07	0.319
-SUI ²	1.3%	4	300	0.7%	2	307				0.4%	1	268	%.		267			
-UI ³	0.7%	2	300	%.		307				0.7%	2	268	0.4%	1	267			
Mesh removed ⁴	1.1%	Э	285	3.9%	12	305	3.42	1.01 to 11.60	0.049	0.8%	2	259	0.4%	1	257	0.55	0.05 to 6.29	0.630
Readmitted to hospital	1.7%	5	302	2.3%	7	309	1.43	0.49 to 4.16	0.513	2.2%	9	269	%.	•	261			
-POP other ⁵	1.0%	З	302	1.6%	5	309				1.5%	4	269	%.	•	261			
-UI other ⁶	0.7%	2	302	0.6%	2	309				0.7%	2	269	%.		261			
6-Year outcomes																		
No. of women at 6 years	N = 272			N = 277						N = 238			N = 250	_				
New prolapse operation ¹	2.6%	7	272	2.5%	7	275	1.02	0.36 to 2.87	0.972	2.5%	9	238	3.6%	6	248	1.47	0.84 to 2.57	0.174
Continence surgery	1.9%	5	270	0.4%	-	276	0.24	0.02 to 2.43	0.227	2.1%	5	236	0.4%	1	249	0.18	0.02 to 1.80	0.144
-SUI ²	0.7%	0	270	%.		276				0.8%	0	236	0.4%	1	249			
-UI ³	1.1%	б	270	0.4%	1	276				1.3%	б	236	%.		249			
Mesh removed ⁴	0.7%	7	268	2.2%	9	269	2.95	0.69 to 12.70	0.146	0.4%	1	232	0.4%	1	240	0.89	0.04 to 22.16	0.945
Readmitted to hospital	0.4%	1	268	1.1%	б	277	2.99	0.20 to 44.51	0.427	0.4%	1	236	0.4%	1	247	0.85	0.08 to 8.56	0.888
-POP other ⁵	0.4%	1	268	0.7%	7	277				0.4%	1	236	%.		247			
-UI other ⁶	0%	0	268	0.4%	1	277				0%	0	236	0.4%	1	247			
Footnotes:																		
1. Repeat prolapse surgery: anterior or posterior repair, vaginal hysterectomy (if for prolapse), vault repair, sacrospinous fixation	: anterior	or post	erior re	pair, vagin	ıal hyst	erecton	ny (if for p	rolapse), vault 1	repair, sacı	rospinous	fixatio	u						
2. Surgery for SUI: tape, midurethral sling, colposuspension, traditional sling, anterior repair (if for SUI), other	nidurethral	sling,	colpos	uspension,	tradition	ils lanc	ng, anteric	vr repair (if for S	SUI), other	L								
3. Other surgery for UI (any UI/urgency UI): Botox, sacral nerve	ny UI/urgei	ncy UI): Boto	x, sacral n	erve sti	mulatic	i (SNS), i	stimulation (SNS), injectables, other	ЭГ									
4. Any admission for mesh removal or mesh problems	removal (or mesl	h probl	ems														
5. Any other admission for prolapse-related problems: pessaries,	r prolapse-	related	l proble	ms: pessai		nulatic	m tissue pi	granulation tissue procedures, Fenton's procedure (for tight vagina), adhesion removal, other	on's proced	dure (for ti	ight va	gina), a	dhesion r	emoval	, other			

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6. Any other admission for urinary tract-related problems: UTIs, urinary retention, cystoscopy (if thought to be related to previous POP or continence surgery), catheter problems, other

To date only four RCTs assessing vaginal surgery for prolapse with mid-term (5-7 years) follow-up have been published [1, 2, 15, 16]. Three compared polypropylene mesh kits to native tissue repairs and one compared allograft to native tissue repairs. All the studies were small, with < 200participants. They were all powered to assess large differences in anatomical outcomes. However, in their long-term follow-up phase, most changed their primary outcome and chose to report PROMs instead. Hence, they all have a significant risk of bias because they are underpowered.

Only one study is directly comparable to PROSPECT, performed in women having primary surgery in 12 centres across France [2, 17]. At 1 year they concluded mesh vaginal wall prolapse repairs give better 1-year anatomical results than traditional colporrhaphy. However, there is no difference in the later follow-up phase. Allegre's trial in primary cases using mesh kits found there was no benefit from mesh kits over native tissue repairs at 5 to 8 years follow-up [2].

Our composite success rate was comparable to the other trials even though they included anatomical data. Milani et al. [1] used a composite outcome of (1) presence of no bulge on POP-Q [18], (2) no symptom of bulge and (3) no further treatment. They found native tissue cure rate was 54% and polypropylene mesh was 53% at 7 years.

Milani et al. [1] found anatomical recurrence in the nonmesh compartment for those who had transvaginal mesh and in the operative compartment for those who had native tissue repair. Allegre et al. [2] also found an anatomical failure rate of 67% in the native tissue group compared to only 24% in polypropylene mesh group.

The interpretation of polypropylene mesh complications in PROSPECT is limited by the lack of physical examination. There will be some women who have undiagnosed asymptomatic exposures. In PROSPECT, 8.4% of women in the polypropylene mesh group required further surgery for mesh exposure. This is very similar to other studies; Allegre et al. [2] found 8%, Milani et al. [1] 13% and Heinonen et al. [19] in a large case series found 11.2% required further surgery.

In PROSPECT, the background rate of polypropylene mesh complications in the native tissue and biological xenograft groups, arising from polypropylene mesh inserted at another time, was 0.9% and 1.6% respectively. This background rate may not be accounted for in case series.

One of PROSPECT's strengths was the ability of the RCT design to compare complications to native tissue repairs. Of note there was also no difference in dyspareunia or general pain (assessed by EQ5D) between groups. Milani et al. and Allegre et al. also found no significant difference in pain or dyspareunia between the groups [1, 2]. Our recent publication assessing the whole cohort of women in PROS-PECT (primary, secondary and cohort study) at 2 years also found no difference [7]. This raises the possibility that

total polypropylene mesh removal surgery for these indications may not be beneficial and this requires urgent further research.

Strengths and weaknesses

The strength of PROSPECT remains its size, generalisability and robust methodology. Unlike other studies criticised in the Cumberlege report [8] for being sponsored by industry, PROSPECT was independent, funded by the UK National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme.

Due to the average age of women who undergo prolapse surgery, all prolapse studies will encounter issues with longterm follow-up due to unrelated mortality, increasing comorbidity and frailty, which should occur equally across all randomised groups. This is one of the reasons RCTs provide more accurate results than case series, registries or cohort studies. At 6 years we have maintained follow-up for the primary outcome of the trial in 65% of women.

In addition, the proportion of women having concomitant upper compartment prolapse or continence surgery were evenly distributed between the randomised groups and therefore did not have an impact on the findings.

Notably, the pain and dyspareunia rates were similar across all groups. This highlights the importance of RCT methods to evaluate conditions. Case series may provide a biased impression of complication rates if there is no comparator group [20, 21]. However, RCTs can never be large enough to detect rare complications which require large population-based epidemiological studies. Such studies do then need to be followed by biological studies to determine causation versus association.

One of PROSPECT's weaknesses was the lack of anatomical data, although one could argue that anatomical data matters little to women for whom symptoms are paramount. Currently, there is also inconsistency in evaluation of anatomical outcomes due to lack of standardisation of strain or time of measurement, which will reduce their validity. However, anatomical data may help us to understand the mechanism of failure in the different procedures. Anatomical data were not collected at 4 and 6 years for two reasons. The first was the significant increased financial cost of physical assessments. The second was concern about the risk of trial fatigue. Hence, physical examination was planned to be limited to the end point at 12 years. This time frame was chosen using the very limited data available on long-term recurrence of prolapse (Olsen) [3].

The study included many different types of polypropylene mesh and biological xenograft, which some clinicians feel is a weakness because they believe in the performance of certain products in their hands. However, there will always be companies who reproduce other similar devices used by surgeons with a variety of training and experience. Hence, the real-world pragmatic approach of PROSPECT is much more useful to women and health service planners.

PROSPECT was initially criticised for choosing to use polypropylene mesh inlays as opposed to mesh kits. However, most mesh kits have since been withdrawn from the market and therefore knowledge about the efficacy of inlays has become more important. Also, following the recommendations of NICE [22] and the Cumberlege report [8], some surgeons may consider using biological xenografts instead of polypropylene mesh inlays. However, our trial suggests there is no benefit of these over native tissue repairs.

Future research

We consider our trial to have only reached mid-term followup because the seminal paper by Olsen et al., published 24 years ago, found the mean time between the first and second operation was 12 years [3]. Hence, there is a possibility that potential benefits of polypropylene mesh may not be seen until this time point. Longevity of a procedure and the effects of repeat surgery are important, especially considering the prediction that the mean life expectancy of the population will continue to increase.

The overall composite failure rate in most studies remains high, and although the repeat surgery rate is lower, a need remains for greater understanding of why prolapse surgery fails. Is it due to failure of surgeons to address apical support, variations in lifestyle, connective tissue types, intra-abdominal pressure, neurological factors, failure of the perineal body or anococcygeal raphe leading to a change in the angle of the pelvic floor?

Concerns remain among some women and clinicians that polypropylene mesh may cause chronic pain or be associated with fibromyalgia [8]. It was therefore reassuring that we found no significant difference in the generic quality of life of women, measured using the EQ5D, including the domain which assesses general pain. However, if a complication was very rare, our study would not be large enough to capture such an event.

Conclusions

At 6 years there is no benefit from augmenting primary prolapse repairs with polypropylene mesh inlays or biological xenografts. There was no evidence that polypropylene mesh inlays caused greater pain or dyspareunia than native tissue repairs.

A need remains for long-term follow-up and further research into the pathophysiology of prolapse.

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s00192-022-05308-0. Acknowledgements The authors wish to thank the women who participated in PROSPECT and the clinicians in the 35 hospitals who recruited and provided care for the women. We also thank Margaret MacNeil, Zoe Batham and Dianne Dejean for their secretarial support and data management; the programming team in CHaRT, led by Gladys McPherson (to 2016) and Mark Forrest (2016-present); members of the Project Management Group for their ongoing advice and support of the study; and the staff at the recruitment sites who facilitated the recruitment, treatment and follow-up of participants.

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Funding The project was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme (Project Number 07/60/18). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care. The Health Services Research Unit and the Health Economics Research Unit are funded by the Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates.

Trial registration: ISRCTN60695184

Declarations

Details of ethics approval PROSPECT was approved by the North of Scotland Research Ethics Committee (NOSRES) on 7th July 2009 (REC reference number 09/SO802/56).

Conflicts of interest Professor Freeman reports previous (not in the last 5-years) speaker fees for Astellas and Pfizer. All other authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Mary Kilonzo is the current Health Economics Editor of the Cochrane Incontinence Group.

Professor Norrie declares grants from University of Aberdeen and grants from University of Edinburgh during the conduct of the study and membership of the following NIHR boards: Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Board; CPR decision-making committee; HTA Commissioning Board; HTA Commissioning Sub-Board (EOI); HTA Funding Boards Policy Group; HTA General Board; HTA Post-Board funding teleconference; NIHR CTU Standing Advisory Committee; NIHR HTA & EME Editorial Board; Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Impact Review Panel. **Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

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