



The International Consortium of
Investigative Journalists

2018
ANNUAL REPORT

FROM THE DIRECTOR

FOR DECADES, the world's medical device approval system has allowed defective implants to spill, like contaminated water from a broken pipe, onto the market. Many of those products have remained on hospital shelves, and in patients' bodies, long after problems were detected.

This year, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and more than 50 media partners around the world took an unprecedented look into the medical device industry. The Implant Files is a yearlong investigation that shows regulators bowing to industry pressure to rush approvals, lower safety standards and keep critical information out of sight. The consequences: a string of grisly accidents that have left hundreds of thousands disfigured, disabled or dead.

The project sparked immediate reforms all over the world – from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which began tweeting about proposed changes hours before the investigation was published, to authorities in the EU, Australia, Canada, India and counting.

The Implant Files was ICIJ's flagship investigation in 2018, only our second year of being an independent, nonprofit organization.

Meanwhile, our work in other areas continued to yield incredible results. We produced West Africa Leaks, the largest-ever collaboration of journalists in the region, and the Alma Mater project, a collaboration among U.S. newsrooms. We exposed revelations in new Panama Papers documents and released the first version of our Datashare technology project. We also reported dozens of follow up stories and achieved thousands of positive press mentions all over the world.

But I single out the Implant Files because it was an opportunity for us to test whether our collaborative model made famous by the Panama Papers and Paradise Papers investigations could work without a leak and beyond the universe of offshore banking to expose broken system worldwide. In the end, we realized, it did.

We assembled the largest healthcare investigative team ever: more than 250 journalists in 36 countries. Our reporting took us to homes and hospitals from South Carolina to suburban India, to Korea, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Hungary and beyond. We pulled court cases and financial records and conducted online surveys. We interviewed nearly 300 patients and submitted more than 1,500 requests for public records.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



We had to be open to new ideas, new types of reporting, new issues ripe for investigation – all while remaining committed to the spirit of ICIJ.

In the end, ICIJ was able to identify more than 1.7 million injuries and 83,000 deaths over the past decade linked to devices approved with less scrutiny than required for prescription drugs.

We built the International Medical Devices Database, which allows the public for the first time to search records – more than 76,000 from 13 countries and counting – to find whether their device has been flagged for official safety concerns. Doctors, patients and researchers are already using the database in large numbers. We expect it will be one of the longest-lasting contributions of this investigation.

The Implant Files represents an important and necessary phase of growth for ICIJ. After coming to prominence in recent years for leak-based stories focused on the offshore industry, we had to prove that this type of global, collaborative journalism can work for a variety of public interest subjects. We had to be open to new ideas, new types of reporting, new issues ripe for investigation – all while remaining committed to the spirit of ICIJ. With the Implant Files, we have done just that: we have trained hundreds of journalists, we have built an unprecedented database that serves the public, and we have planted the seeds for future investigations. In many ways, the Implant Files are just the beginning. We now know that the possibilities for ICIJ are endless.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gerard Ryle'.

Gerard Ryle
ICIJ Director



OUR MISSION AND WHO WE ARE

ICIJ'S MISSION is to uncover and highlight systemic failures that undermine the public good, using the power of technology-driven, cross-border investigative journalism.

ICIJ is both a small, resourceful newsroom and a global network of reporters and media organizations who work together to investigate the most important stories in the world. We report on issues that know no borders: crime, corruption, and the accountability of power.

We produce global, collaborative investigative journalism in the public interest that has immediate and long-lasting impact.

We believe in the power of innovation to drive our reporting. We marry traditional journalism with cutting-edge tools and technology.

We support a growing and trusted network of journalists through hands-on training and sharing knowledge.





GLOBAL, COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

IMPLANT FILES

ICIJ's Implant Files is the world's largest-ever collaborative health care investigation. It exposed the dark side of a global medical device industry that pressures regulators to speed up approvals, lower safety standards and keep information out of reach, resulting in grisly accidents that have left thousands of patients disfigured, disabled or dead.

ICIJ partnered with more than 250 journalists from 58 media outlets in 36 countries to examine how devices are tested, approved, marketed and monitored. Our team found artificial hips that corrode flesh and poison blood, spinal-cord stimulators that shock and permanently injure and surgical mesh that cuts into tissue, causing chronic pain and bleeding – all greenlit through the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval pathway.

“I’ve been left abandoned in a prison of debilitating pain. Speaking my truth is as close to justice as I will have.”

– Amanda Tallent, who suffered for nine years from implanted mesh.

GLOBAL, COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM



Misty Holliman says she was not warned about health risks associated with the Essure birth control device before it was implanted.

We found:

- A metal intrauterine contraceptive that remained on sale in the U.S. long after it was pulled from the shelves in other countries for wreaking havoc on women's reproductive systems
- The FDA allowed device makers to bury thousands of breast implant injury reports and uncovered evidence of the risks of one of the most popular models of breast implants.
- Industry giant Medtronic had repeatedly violated a 2008 pledge to U.S. authorities that it would obey the law and violated it on a global scale.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL DEVICES DATABASE

Over the course of the investigation, ICIJ and its partners filed more than 1,500 public records requests and collected more than 8 million device-related health records worldwide. The largest share came from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Manufacturer and User Facility Device Experience (MAUDE) database. ICIJ's analysis of this data found that faulty medical devices were linked to more than 1.7 million injuries and nearly 83,000 deaths over the last decade.

Overall, information about medical devices is difficult to gather, and ICIJ found that the public was basically left in the dark about whether a device had a problem. Fewer than 20 percent of the countries in the world have public data online permitting citizens to find medical device safety alerts and recalls.

To help fill this gap, ICIJ built the International Medical Devices Database, which allows the public for the first time to search records to find whether a device had been flagged for safety concerns. By the end of 2018, the database contained information on more than 76,000 recalls, safety alerts and field safety notices about medical devices distributed worldwide, and we plan to add data as it becomes available.



GLOBAL, COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

WEST AFRICA LEAKS

ICIJ published West Africa Leaks, a regional investigation with 13 journalists from 11 countries in West Africa, several of which we had never worked with before. West Africa Leaks exposed the financial secrets of some of the region's most powerful politicians, moguls, and corporations using data from ICIJ's past offshore investigations. As the largest media collaboration in West African history, it's the first time many of these powerful figures in the region have come under this level of scrutiny.

ICIJ spent six months working in secret to recruit journalists from the region and train them on how to use our data and tools. They pored over 27.5 million files from our recent offshore investigations, including Offshore Leaks, Swiss Leaks, Panama Papers and Paradise Papers. ICIJ, along with the regional nonprofit news organization Cenozo, helped journalists every

step of the way, from setting up email encryption for secure communication to tracking down documents all over the world.

THE PANAMA PAPERS FALLOUT

ICIJ reported on newly leaked documents from Mossack Fonseca, the law firm at the center of the Panama Papers investigation. The new leak – about 1.2 million files – provided a view inside Mossack Fonseca just weeks before the Panama Papers broke in April 2016 and its aftermath. It reveals the back-and-forth correspondence between Mossack Fonseca employees and also shows how the company reacted. The firm slashed its fees, and some employees moved to other legal outfits who would take on the old clients.

PARADISE PAPERS, ONE YEAR LATER

We answered readers' questions about the Paradise Papers investigation – everything

from how the financial industry is adapting to whistleblowers to why Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was not being investigated.

OFFSHORE LEAKS DATABASE

We added more data than ever to the Offshore Leaks Database. Users can now search more than 785,000 trusts, companies or funds and more than 720,000 officers.

ALMA MATER PROJECT

We released stories from the Alma Mater project, a collaboration among U.S. newsrooms to investigate colleges, universities, foundations and other nonprofits found in the Paradise Papers. The investigation showed nonprofits repeatedly making investments that contradict their missions, such as investments by environmental groups in the fossil fuel industry.

IMMEDIATE AND CONTINUED IMPACT

ICIJ's work has a well-established track record of creating real change for communities around the world.

THE IMPLANT FILES had immediate and profound impact.

- **The day after ICIJ published Implant Files**, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced it would enact the “most significant modernization” in a generation of how the agency clears most medical devices for sale. It later announced action to strengthen oversight of surgical mesh, as well as planned steps to increase breast implant safety. The FDA also declared an “ambitious new goal” to be “first among the world’s regulatory agencies” to identify harmful devices.
- **The Implant Files sparked reform pledges overseas.** French health authorities ordered a recall of Allergan’s textured breast implants. Allergan said it was removing the implants across the EU because regulators would no longer certify them.
- **In Canada**, health authorities announced an action plan to improve oversight of medical devices. The health minister said in a statement: “The government of Canada agrees that more can be done to further strengthen oversight of medical devices and to be more open and transparent with Canadians. I am deeply concerned by recent reports of serious issues Canadians have been facing with implanted medical devices.”
- **Authorities in Denmark, Spain, Italy and India** have also pledged significant overhauls of medical device oversight.

IMMEDIATE AND LONG-LASTING IMPACT

THE PANAMA PAPERS and **PARADISE PAPERS** continue to have impact.

- **The first-ever criminal charges** related to the investigation were filed in the United States. The Department of Justice charged four men with tax and money-laundering offenses, including two employees of Mossack Fonseca, the law firm at the center of the Panama Papers investigation.
- **The U.K. announced** it will force overseas territories, including the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and other well-known corporate secrecy havens, to reveal the names of the ultimate owners behind companies in these remote locations. Politicians cited both the Panama and Paradise Papers for bringing the issue to light.
- **In Germany**, more than 170 police officers and officials raided Deutsche Bank's Frankfurt headquarters as part of a Panama Papers-related money laundering investigation. The investigation is focused on whether the bank helped clients secure offshore accounts to transfer money from criminal activities.
- **Mossack Fonseca**, the offshore law firm whose 11.5 million leaked files were at the heart of the Panama Papers investigation, closed its doors.
- **Pakistan's anti-corruption court** sentenced former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to seven years in prison on corruption charges, a second conviction since the Panama Papers investigation revealed his family's wealth. Sharif was previously sentenced to 10 years in prison but was released on bail pending appeal.
- **Governments around the world** have recouped more than \$700 million in fines and back taxes as a result of the Panama Papers investigation.

THE POWER OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY



DATASHARE

ICIJ invests in creating tools that can facilitate collaborative, cross-border investigations. In 2018, ICIJ's tech team developed Datashare, a first-of-its-kind, innovative platform that will integrate vast datasets – including all data from ICIJ's projects as well as public data – so journalists can draw connections and identify relationships across multiple databases. Journalists will also be able to add to these datasets, as Datashare will allow them to index documents and share them with other journalists around the world working on related issues. It will allow journalists to discover new relationships and connections that were previously unknown, leading to powerful investigations that uncover corruption, transnational crime and abuse of power. This type of innovation – driven by a model built on sharing and collaboration – is what sets ICIJ apart from other nonprofit newsrooms.



MACHINE LEARNING

ICIJ has started to explore ways to utilize machine learning techniques for our data-driven investigations. For Implant Files, ICIJ used machine learning algorithms to screen millions of records in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Manufacturer and User Facility Device Experience (MAUDE) database. Machine learning allowed us to identify reports in which the description of an adverse event indicated that a patient had died, but the death was misclassified as a malfunction or injury. The process involved teaching the computer to identify death reports based on other language when the word "death" was not present.

In the end, ICIJ found 2,100 cases in which the patient died, but their deaths were classified as device malfunctions or injuries. Of these, 220 reports indicated that devices may have caused or contributed to the deaths.

A TRUSTED NETWORK OF JOURNALISTS



ICIJ'S NETWORK consists of more than 220 journalists, spanning 83 countries and territories. In 2018, we welcomed 22 new journalist members, including journalists from countries where ICIJ hasn't had members before: Austria, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, Syria and Togo.

ICIJ's independent network committee led the process of selecting new members. Head of the committee, ICIJ member and journalist Minna Knus-Galán said of the cohort, "They are not only excellent investigative journalists with high integrity and professional standards, but they have also proven to be great team members with experience of cross-border investigations."

The new members are: Alicia Ortega Hasbun (Dominican Republic), David Dembele (Mali), Emilia Delfino (Argentina), Guilherme Amado (Brazil), Guillermo Draper (Uruguay), Jyri Hänninen (Finland), Karlijn Kuijpers (The Netherlands), Koami 'Maxime' Domegni (Togo), Micael Pereira (Portugal), Michael Nikbakhsh (Austria), Mokhtar al-Ibrahim (Syria), Mohammed Komani (Yemen), Musab AL-shawabkeh (Jordan), Natalia Viana (Brazil), Nelfi Fernandez Reyes (Bolivia), Ntibinyane 'Alvin' Ntibinyane (Botswana), Ola Westerberg (Sweden), P Vaidyanathan Iyer (India), Pelin Ünker (Turkey), Sandra Crucianelli (Argentina), Elza Sandrine Sawadogo (Burkina Faso), Yasuomi Sawa (Japan).

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

A GROWING TEAM, A NEW HEADQUARTERS

ICIJ hired 17 contract and full-time staff across editorial, digital, research, technology, development and administrative departments in 2018.

- Anne L'Hôte, front-end developer
- Antonio Cucho, web developer
- Ashlee Guevara, IT specialist
- Ben Hallman, senior reporter
- Bruno Thomas, senior developer
- Cat Ferguson, reporter
- Delphine Reuter, researcher
- Fergus Shiel, project manager
- Hilary Fung, graphic designer
- Karrie Kehoe, researcher
- Razzan Nakhlawi, digital producer
- Madeline O'Leary, rails developer
- Margot Williams, researcher
- Pauliina Siniauer, researcher
- Petra Blum, researcher
- Soline Ledésert, UX designer
- Sydney Freedberg, senior reporter
- Vanessa Chebli, development associate

ICIJ's Washington, D.C.-based staff moved into a new office space to accommodate its growing team. Support for the new office was generously provided by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.



ICIJ's new office in Washington, D.C.

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

REPRESENTING ICIJ AROUND THE WORLD



ICIJ's deputy director, Marina Walker Guevara, joins a panel of journalists and colleagues at USC Annenberg in Los Angeles. The event, "Safeguarding the truth: press freedom and the fight for accountability," was sponsored by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, one of ICIJ's funders.



ICIJ's reporter Simon Bowers gives a TEDx talk in Glasgow on how ICIJ investigated the Paradise Papers and Panama Papers.



ICIJ's Chief Technology Officer Pierre Romera delivers a presentation on the Paradise Papers at Strata Data Conference.



Will Fitzgibbon, ICIJ's coordinator of African partnerships, conducts a training session in Senegal with journalists.



ICIJ's research editor Emilia Diaz-Struck (third from the left) attends the premiere of the Panama Papers documentary at the Hamptons International Film Festival.



ICIJ's chief reporter, Ben Hallman, appears on CBCNews to discuss the Implant Files.

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



LAUNCHING ICIJ INSIDERS

ICIJ launched a membership program to help grow and sustain a reliable and dedicated grassroots donor base. The ICIJ Insiders program has three levels of membership: Change the Conversation, Change the Rules and Change the World.

Insiders receive unique benefits, like quarterly round-ups of our top stories and exclusive access to chats with reporters.

This community of more than **1,000 supporters** raised **\$300,000** for ICIJ in 2018.

More information is available at www.icij.org/donate.

Insiders, on why they give:

“Your work is courageous and selfless. You are helping to shine a light in the dark.”

“ICIJ has had phenomenal impact, and journalists are my heroes.”

“You are doing the most important work in the world.”

“I think this will make a difference in the way the world is run by the rich and powerful.”

“Transparency and accountability in government are the bedrock of democracy.”

“Your independent, cross-border investigations have become an essential journalistic tool.”

GLOBAL REACH

Media partners we worked with to publish stories

 **129**


Number of countries where stories were published that ICIJ was involved in/helped with

 **80**

Email subscribers

 **83,000**

Visitors to ICIJ's website and databases

 **3.8 million**
(generating 18 million page views)

Facebook followers

 **126,379**

 **2.6%** growth for 2018

Twitter followers

 **168,352**

 **10%** growth for 2018

Instagram followers

 **1,511**

AWARDS



“The judges selected ICIJ for its technological prowess in making a vast cache of records usable for reporters spread across the word, its ethos of ‘radical collaboration’ and the broad impact of the resulting stories, which prompted investigations and changes in tax policy in several countries.”

– IRE Awards’ judges

ICIJ’S PARADISE PAPERS received the following awards in 2018:

- IRE Awards, Investigative Reporters & Editors - Innovation in Watchdog Journalism
- The George Polk Awards, Long Island University - Financial Reporting
- NYC SPJ Deadline Club - Business Investigative Reporting
- Society of Professional Journalists SDX Awards - Non-Deadline/Affiliated
- SPJ DC Dateline Awards - Robert D.G. Lewis Award (best in show)
- SPJ DC Dateline Awards - Investigative
- SPJ DC Dateline Awards - Infographics
- New York State Society of CPAs Excellence in Financial Journalism - Enterprise
- EPPY Awards - Best Collaborative Investigative/Enterprise Reporting

FINANCES 2018

REVENUE

Foundation Grants	\$6,591,886
Small Donors (less than \$1,000)	\$128,002
Major Grants & Gifts (\$1,000 or more)	\$79,765
Other Income	\$8,000
Total	\$6,807,653

EXPENSES

Personnel	\$2,860,701
Web & Internet Support	\$228,349
Travel	\$189,549
Professional fees	\$163,247
Occupancy	\$128,505
Insurance	\$42,504
Fiscal Sponsor Fees	\$34,240
Other Expenses	\$101,377
Total	\$3,748,472

Major funders in 2018 included:

- Adessium Foundation
- Bay and Paul Foundations
- David and Helen Gurley Brown Institute for Media Innovation
- Ford Foundation
- Fritt Ord Foundation
- Fund for Nonprofit News at The Miami Foundation
- Green Park Foundation
- Hollywood Foreign Press Association
- John and Florence Newman Foundation
- Jonathan Logan Family Foundation
- Laura and John Arnold
- Luminate
- KCIJ Newstapa
- Moses Lubash Family Fund
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)
- Open Society Foundations
- Rutgers Presbyterian Foundation
- Swedish Postcode Foundation

ICIJ STAFF

Amy Wilson-Chapman
Engagement Editor

Anne L'Hôte
Front-end Developer

Antonio Cucho
Web Developer

Ashlee Guevara
IT Manager

Ben Hallman
Chief Reporter

Bruno Thomas
Senior Developer

Caitlin Ginley Sigal
Grants Manager

Dean Starkman
Senior Editor

Emilia Díaz-Struck
Research Editor and Coordinator of Latin American Partnerships

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Rails Developer

Marina Walker Guevara
Deputy Director

Martha Hamilton
Senior Editor

Miguel Fiandor Gutiérrez
Web and Data Application Developer

Pierre Romera
Chief Technology Officer

Razzan Nakhlawi
Digital Producer

Richard H.P. Sia
Associate Editor and Chief Fact-Checker

Rigoberto Carvajal
Data Expert

Sasha Chavkin
Reporter

Scilla Alecci
Reporter and Coordinator of Asian Partnerships

Simon Bowers
Reporter and Coordinator of European Partnerships

Soline Ledésert
User Experience Designer

Spencer Woodman
Reporter

Vanessa Chebli
Development Associate

Will Fitzgibbon
Senior Reporter and Coordinator of African and Middle Eastern Partnerships

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The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

1710 Rhode Island Ave. NW 11th Floor

Washington, D.C. 20036

(202) 808-3310

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