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Michelle Stesiak, a mother from South Carolina in her fifties, endured a severe medical complication after beginning treatment with the weight loss drug Ozempic. Just six weeks after starting the medication, Stesiak experienced intense pain radiating from under her breasts to her back. The incident occurred at 3 AM while she was visiting her daughter in Pittsburgh, causing her son-in-law to rush her to the hospital.

Initially suspected of having a twisted bowel, Stesiak was diagnosed with pancreatitis. Pancreatitis is a potentially fatal condition involving inflammation of the pancreas, which can lead to severe complications such as tissue necrosis, infection, and sepsis if the blood supply is interrupted. Stesiak described the pain as worse than childbirth, causing her to vomit and experience diarrhea.

The case was highlighted in Johann Hari's book "Magic Pill: The Extraordinary Benefits and Disturbing Risks of the New Weight Loss Drug." While pancreatitis is recognized as a serious but uncommon side effect of Ozempic, it generally affects about one in a hundred to one in a thousand users. According to studies, users of Ozempic are up to nine times more likely to develop pancreatitis compared to non-users.

Since her recovery, Stesiak has stopped taking Ozempic and is cautioning others about the risks of the drug, which has gained popularity among millions of Americans. The exact mechanisms causing pancreatitis from Ozempic are not fully understood, but prevailing theories suggest it may involve the drug’s interaction with glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptors in the pancreas or alterations in metabolism.

Apart from pancreatitis, Ozempic poses additional health risks, including a heightened likelihood of thyroid cancer and cosmetic issues like "Ozempic face" and "Ozempic butt." Despite extensive testing, concerns linger about potential long-term effects that may not manifest for decades.