



The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

Suite 3 Level 4, 169 Macquarie Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

3rd October, 2008

New disclosure system to raise standards and protect patients

In an Australian first, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) today announced a new mandatory patient disclosure system as part of its campaign to raise industry standards and ensure better patient protection.

Under new disclosure rules it will be mandatory for ACCS members to advise patients at the time of the initial consultation about a procedure the number of times they have performed the procedure before, if it is less than 100 times.

“How many times a doctor has performed a procedure before is one of the most important pieces of information a patient needs to be able to make an informed choice of practitioner especially if the doctor is relatively inexperienced in the procedure.

“The College has always advised patients to ask doctors this question but sometimes patients may feel uneasy about doing this. By ensuring doctors disclose their experience if it is less than 100 procedures, patients will be better informed and able to assess the relative experience of their doctor in that particular procedure,” ACCS President, Dr Daniel Fleming said.

“We are promoting increased transparency between doctors and patients. Disclosure means the patient is better protected and industry standards will rise at the same time.

“Patients need to be able to make informed decisions about the doctors who perform what is often a life changing procedure. As well as ensuring the doctor has been specifically trained and assessed in cosmetic surgery, they need to know the level of the doctor’s experience in the procedure they are considering.

“We are calling upon other professional bodies such as the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) to follow our lead so that patients are receiving consistent levels of disclosure from doctors, regardless of their professional association. After qualification it takes time to accumulate experience and patients should not be misled about this.”

At present, there is no nationally consistent regulation to monitor cosmetic surgery. ACCS fellows adhere to a Code of Practice as a condition of membership. A breach of this Code may result in disciplinary action handed down by the College’s Board of Censors.

“Our Code and systems of disclosure mean surgeons also have a very clear path for laying out their skills and experience to patients,” Dr Fleming said.

Cosmetic surgery is a specific field that requires particular skills and education distinct to other forms of surgery.

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ACCS accredited cosmetic surgeons are not only qualified doctors with a minimum total of 13 years training, they are bound by their code of practice and have been specifically trained and assessed in the cosmetic surgery. ACCS accredited cosmetic surgeons are also required to undertake annual recertification also specifically in cosmetic surgery.

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is considering an application by the ACCS to recognise cosmetic surgery as a distinct specialty. This decision is likely to be handed down in the next six to nine months.

“Cosmetic surgery already is a medical specialty. Its recognition by the AMC will remove confusion for patients and allow them to identify specialist cosmetic surgeons whose training has been formally approved by the AMC. This would apply equally to all surgeons delivering cosmetic procedures across the country, regardless of which College or Society they belong to,” Dr Fleming said.

Dr Fleming is available for interview and comment

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Media Release