



## The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

*Raising Standards, Protecting Patients*

# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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## **Cosmetic Surgery Code of practice aids informed consent**

***Medical negligence study underlines the importance of enforceable medical codes of practice, which are adhered to, particularly in the area of cosmetic surgery.***

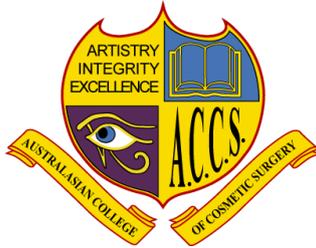
According to the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, a just-released study of medical negligence claims between 2002 and 2008 published in the Medical Journal of Australia underlines the importance that codes of practice can play in ensuring that a proper process is observed to obtain informed consent for cosmetic surgical procedures.

The study, "When informed consent goes poorly: a descriptive study of medical negligence claims and patient complaints", noted that in 71% of cases patients complained that a "complication had not been mentioned or fully understood" and that a significant number of patients "felt rushed, pressured to proceed, or regarded the language used as incomprehensible".

ACCS President Dr Colin Moore said that informed consent is particularly important in cosmetic surgery, which is entirely elective.

"In cosmetic surgery, informed consent is a process that begins before a patient enters a doctor's office. Subjective impressions are formed from advertising, media stories and other sources which may influence expectations of those considering having a cosmetic surgical procedure.

"The College's code of practice, which is the only one to receive authorisation from the ACCC, puts an added onus on the College's member cosmetic surgeons to ensure that their advertising does not interfere with informed consent and to provide additional information to help patients make informed decisions," Dr Moore said.



Continues

Despite the fact that plastic surgeons performing cosmetic procedures experienced dispute rates that were more than double those of any other specialty or group, the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons have vigorously opposed the adoption of an authorised code of practice. The study did not report on claims against cosmetic surgeons.

The ACCS code of practice covers among other things, advertising and other promotional conduct, informed consent guidelines, monitoring of the code and has an extensive governance regime including independent compliance audits and reports to the ACCC.

“The College believes that cosmetic medicine and surgery patients require an effective code of practice and that over time adherence to the code will improve informed consent and patient satisfaction levels. A code is not a silver bullet to improve informed consent but it is an indispensable part of the solution to protect patients,” Dr Moore said.

Dr Moore said that though the ACCS was disappointed that other medical colleges had not adopted an authorised code, he encouraged them to do so for the benefit of patients and practitioners.

The MJA report may be found here:

[http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195\\_06\\_190911/gog10379\\_fm.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195_06_190911/gog10379_fm.html)

The College strongly advises anyone considering having a cosmetic procedure to consult with an appropriately trained doctor. Visit the College's website <http://www.accs.org.au/> for further information and a copy of the College's patient information brochure, “Things you should know”.

**For further information or interviews, contact:**

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**The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery** is a multi-disciplinary body of general surgeons, plastic surgeons, dermatologists, ear nose and throat surgeons, ophthalmologists and other doctors who specialise in cosmetic surgery. The goal of the ACCS is to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic surgery and cosmetic medical procedures to the Australian general community through supply of appropriately trained and certified medical practitioners. The College has made a full application to the Australian Medical Council to have Cosmetic Medical Practice recognised as a new Medical Specialty.