



## The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

*Raising Standards, Protecting Patients*

# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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## COSMETIC SURGERY TOURISM WARNING AFTER PATIENT DEATH

***The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery issued a warning today about the risks of cosmetic surgery tourism after another patient death***

Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) Censor-in Chief Dr John Flynn today said the ACCS was deeply concerned about the continued growth of cosmetic surgery tourism after the [reported death](#) of a Victorian man after having cosmetic surgery in Malaysia.

Cosmetic surgery tourism is a discount, cost-driven business, which often uses commission-driven or otherwise paid agents as well as discounted holiday packages to lure consumers. Such practices are contrary to good medical practice. "If a patient needs or chooses to travel to access surgery then this should be the prime reason for travel, not as a holiday 'add-on'," Dr Flynn said.

[Reports have indicated](#) that as many as 15,000 Australians travelled to Asia in 2015 to obtain discount cosmetic medical and dental procedures. Dr Flynn noted, "The standards of care and facility safety in Australia are the highest in the region. One has to question the wisdom of increasing risks to health and welfare to get a holiday or save a few dollars."

The impacts and risks of issues linked to cosmetic tourism may include:

- Increased risk of complications, infection and impacts on general health particularly with older people where complications are more likely to occur;
- Difficulty in assessing doctors' qualifications and training;
- Difficulty or impossibility for consultation with the surgeon prior to surgery including potential language barriers;
- Follow-up care opportunity is reduced including continuity of care protocols;
- Travel and surgery don't mix, with increased risk of post-operative DVT incidence during flight home;



- Revision work may be required and this can be problematic when the operating surgeon is thousands of miles away. This increases risk and costs to patients and potentially to the public health care system;
- Unsatisfactory results, are very difficult to redress, legally or through other forums such as state health care complaints commissions;
- Australian anaesthetists are among the best in the world and reduce the risk of complications arising from anaesthesia; and
- Australian fellowship-trained Cosmetic Surgeons are among the best in the world and specifically trained in these procedures.

The ACCS is concerned that health care consumers may not fully appreciate whether those apparent discounts and vacation packages are worth the potential for increased risks to their health and safety.

The ACCS believes national standards of education and training be established so that any medical college or university can have its training program assessed against that standard. Patients will be better protected and better equipped to make informed decisions, because they will be able to choose doctors who have undergone appropriate, relevant training, assessment and accreditation specifically in Cosmetic Surgery.

“In the absence of national standards of education and training in Cosmetic Surgery, procedures are more easily commodified in the mind of consumers who will be attracted by price and less informed about training and safety, Dr Flynn said.

Dr Flynn counselled anyone considering cosmetic surgery to do their homework to ensure that their surgeon is properly trained in Cosmetic Surgery. “Don’t hesitate to ask your surgeon to show you their resume and answer questions about their training and experience in the procedure that you are considering,” Dr Flynn said.

As part of its Code of Practice, the ACCS has also produced a patient information brochure, “Things you should know”. The brochure provides information about choosing a doctor and questions to ask before deciding to have cosmetic surgery. The Code of Practice and patient information brochure are available from the College’s website [www.accs.org.au](http://www.accs.org.au).

When choosing a cosmetic physician or surgeon, look for the College logo or the Code of Practice Seal which indicates that doctor agrees to be bound by the College’s strict Code of Practice.



*Your assurance of a high standard*



### **Fast Cosmetic Facts**

- Total annual expenditure on cosmetic surgical and medical and related procedures and treatments in Australia is estimated to be \$1 billion.
- Australians annually consume more than \$350 million worth of wrinkle reduction procedures with botulinum toxin.
- There are approximately 8,000 breast augmentation surgeries performed each year in Australia and about 30,000 liposuction procedures.

Top five cosmetic procedures in Australia:

- Anti-wrinkle injections
- Fillers
- Laser and IPL
- Breast augmentation and reduction
- Liposuction

**ENDS**

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

**Blanche Wilkie M. 0425 279091 Alan Jones m. 0420 757 009**

### **About the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery**

The primary goal of the ACCS is to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic medicine and cosmetic surgical procedures to the Australian community through the supply of appropriately trained and certified health care practitioners.

Established in 1999, the ACCS is a not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary fellowship-based college of general surgeons, cosmetic surgeons, plastic surgeons, maxillofacial surgeons, cosmetic physicians, dermatologists, ear nose and throat surgeons, ophthalmologists, general practitioners and other doctors who practice in cosmetic medicine and surgery. The College also admits nurses as affiliate members.

The ACCS is the only medical college which provides education and training leading to fellowship specifically in cosmetic medicine and surgery. Fellows of the College are medical doctors who have completed post-graduate education and training and have demonstrated competency specifically in cosmetic medicine and surgery. To become an ACCS Fellow, doctors must typically complete a minimum 12 years medical and/or surgical education and training.

For additional information about the ACCS, please visit: <http://www.accs.org.au/>