



AS SEEN IN COSMETIC SURGERY & BEAUTY MAGAZINE

industry

SETTING THE BENCHMARK



THIS YEAR THE **AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF COSMETIC SURGERY** NOTCHES UP 15 YEARS OF SETTING THE STANDARD FOR PATIENT SAFETY AND DOCTOR TRAINING. CAITLIN BISHOP REPORTS.

The latest statistics show Australians spend around \$1 billion on cosmetic surgical and medical-related treatments each year. Suffice it to say, cosmetic surgery is more popular than ever before and it has never been so important to ensure Australian patients are receiving the best possible treatment at the hands of their physicians.

With patient care foremost in its priorities, practice and philosophy, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgeons (ACCS) plays an essential role in regulating and upholding the standards of cosmetic surgery in Australia.

By ensuring the provision of premium quality, consistent safety and optimum patient care in cosmetic procedures, the ACCS signifies one of the major pillars in securing the healthy growth of the Australian industry. Sydney hair restoration surgeon and past president of the ACCS Dr Russell Knudsen says the ACCS plays a leading role in the Australian cosmetic surgery arena.

'ACCS is a leader among the groups that monitor and regulate cosmetic surgery practice in Australia,' he says. 'Its Code Of Practice is the most strict set of regulations applied in Australia and are compulsory for ACCS members.'

Training and accreditation

Since its inception in 1999, the aim of the ACCS has been consistently clear: to ensure the safe delivery of cosmetic surgery and non-surgical procedures to the Australian community. That appropriately trained and certified medical practitioners perform these procedures is paramount, and the ACCS offers formal training and accreditation to its members. 'The ACCS provides comprehensive regular training programs for all members and intense, two-year registrar programs for physician applicants who wish to sit the ACCS Fellowship Exam,' says Dr Knudsen. 'The Fellowship Exam is the only cosmetic surgery-specific exam available in Australia.'

The ACCS plays a key role in ensuring those who practice cosmetic medicine are sufficiently trained. Indeed, to become a Fellow of the ACCS, doctors must complete a minimum of 12 years medical and surgical training.

'To be recognised as a fellow of the ACCS, doctors need to have undergone appropriate training, plus specific procedural training and they must also have demonstrated substantial clinical experience,' says Dr

Cosmetic Medical Practice as a separate medical speciality

The ACCS has applied to the Australian Medical Council (AMC) to have Cosmetic Medical Practice recognised as a Medical Speciality. This term 'Cosmetic Medical Practice', proposed to replace 'Cosmetic Surgery', prevents confusion and is inclusive of both surgical and non-surgical procedures performed only by certified cosmetic practitioners.

Cosmetic Medical Practice is already a well-defined and unique medical specialty, practiced by medical practitioners from various specialties including dermatology, general surgery, plastic and reconstructive surgery, oral and maxillofacial surgery, and gynaecology. Practicing cosmetic procedures requires specialised knowledge and skill not normally found in doctors working in general medicine or in specialists working in general surgery or even in some cases of plastic surgery.

If the specialty was recognised by the AMC, any organisation of doctors, or training facility in Australia, could apply to have their training scheme, qualifications and accreditation processes assessed against the AMC requirements. This would provide better, more comprehensive, protection for consumers and practitioners. It would empower consumers to make informed decisions in selecting a practitioner recognised by the AMC, and provide practitioners in cosmetic medical practice with enhanced transparency and validated recognition.

cosmetic surgery. This is seen in the ACCS Seal of Approval, which can be displayed by any member who complies with the College's Code of Practice.

According to ACCS past-president Dr Colin Moore, the aim of this seal is to protect both practitioners and patients. He sees it as an objective accreditation that empowers patients to make informed decisions and protects practitioners by increasing the transparency of their practice.

Furthering this commitment to patient and physician protection, the ACCS has recently applied to the Australian Medical Council (AMC) to have Cosmetic Medical Practice recognised as a 'medical specialty'.

This would mean any organisation or training facility in the country could apply to have their training scheme assessed against the requirements established by the AMC – affording greater clarity for both patients and physicians in making decisions to undertake, or become involved with, cosmetic surgery in Australia.

Looking forward

With cosmetic surgery more popular than ever before – and showing no signs of slowing down – it is imperative Australians have access to transparent, professional and regulated information in deciding to undergo treatment.

The ACCS provides the guidelines, and sets the standards, for cosmetic surgery practice in Australia and affords a valuable resource for patients seeking cosmetic enhancement of any kind – invasive and non-invasive.

Looking forward, Dr Knudsen explains the ACCS will play a central role in ensuring cosmetic surgery remains a strong, reputable and reliable field in Australia.

'The ACCS will continue to be a critical part of the ongoing setting of standards and maintenance of safe practice,' Dr Knudsen says. 'To this end, the College, is also in regular contact with other stakeholders and particularly with the government.'

'Encouragement of practitioners to sit examinations, time-limiting the accreditations available by examination, and annual requirements for proof of satisfactory continuing medical education, will ensure industry standards are both raised and maintained in the years to come,' Dr Knudsen concludes. **csbm**

John Flynn, past-president of the ACCS. 'We also ensure our fellows are participating in continuing education and, where needed, re-certification.'

Importantly, the ACCS facilitates ongoing education and auditing for all its existing members. This ensures the established standards are maintained on a long-term basis.

'All members must re-certify each year and this involves annual attainment of strict continuing education criteria, for example scientific meetings, publications, etc.,' Dr Knudsen explains. 'In addition, procedural audits of medical practitioners affords another level of monitoring standards of practice.'

Alongside training, the ACCS has a Code of Practice that covers, among other things, advertising and promotional guidelines and informed consent regulations.

Patient peace of mind

Currently, the ACCS is a voluntary scheme for doctors, but signifies a beacon of reassurance for patients hoping to receive monitored and regulated care in undertaking

