



The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

Raising Standards, Protecting Patients

EMBOGED UNTIL 12:01AM SATURDAY 12 MAY 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

PATIENTS NEED TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST ROGUE MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS CALLING THEMSELVES 'COSMETIC SURGEONS'

Australia's peak body for cosmetic surgeons has called on the Australian Government to strengthen its guidelines on who can operate on patients, following revelations in the Supreme Court this week about possible unsafe activity taking place at a popular surgery in Sydney.

The Supreme Court heard that two women, Amy Rickhuss, 24, and a 42-year-old, needed resuscitation on the operating table at two clinics run by The Cosmetic Institute, at Parramatta and Bondi Junction, and had to be rushed to hospital.

The TCI rendered some patients unconscious during procedures when only licensed to provide conscious or twilight sedation.

Senior members of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) initially alerted authorities to the dubious practices at TCI in 2015, in the interests of public safety.

Australia now has a bigger annual spend on cosmetic procedures per capita than the US and it is estimated we spend more than \$1 billion annually on up to 500,000 separate procedures, excluding the 'underground' black market.

ACCS President Dr Ron Bezic said regulators and the public were confused by up to five types of medical operators calling themselves 'cosmetic surgeon' when most do not have the professional capability to do so.

"Anyone from fly-in fly-out operators, registered GPs, plastic surgeons and right up to the highest standard of Fellow of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgeons can call themselves a cosmetic surgeon," Dr Bezic said.

"Patients have no way of knowing whether their surgeon is properly qualified and has undergone specific training in cosmetic surgery.

“Australia’s most highly trained cosmetic surgeons are usually ACCS Fellows and they regularly need to rectify unsafe procedures performed by untrained practitioners.

“This system it is a complete lottery for patients. There is no simple, national and easily recognisable way for patients to know whether they are in safe hands.

“Patients can already be assured that ACCS Fellows have the strongest credentials, including two years of mandatory dedicated cosmetic surgery training, following 4-6 years earning a medical degree, and a further five years surgical experience. No other body has the same degree of rigour and standards for cosmetic surgery.”

Australia’s peak medical training regulator, The Australian Medical Council, last year found plastic surgeons had a knowledge ‘gap’ in their training when it came to cosmetic surgery.

In comparison, only Fellows of the ACCS have mandatory two years specialised cosmetic surgery training.

“The Australian Health Minister, Greg Hunt, should bring together the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, the Royal Australian College of Surgeons and other stakeholders to develop a system of accreditation to provide better and safer outcomes for patients,” Dr Bezic said.

Table 1: Types of surgeon performing cosmetic surgery in Australian in 2018

	Type of surgeon	Minimum years of training	Detail
1	Cosmetic surgeon (ACCS Fellow)	12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 5 years postgraduate surgery experience • Mandatory 2 years ACCS specialized cosmetic surgery training
2	Plastic surgeon (RACS Fellow and Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) Member)	12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 5 years postgraduate surgery experience • Optional six months ASPS specialized cosmetic surgery training
3	General practitioner (RACGP Fellow)	7-11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 3-5 years postgraduate study • Zero specialized cosmetic surgery training
4	Registered medical practitioner	5-7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 1 year internship • Zero specialized cosmetic surgery training
5	Fly in fly out practitioner with no qualifications	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero specialized cosmetic surgery training

The top five most popular cosmetic surgical practices in Australia include anti-wrinkle injection, fillers, laser and Intense Pulsed Light (IPL), breast augmentation and reduction and liposuction including:

- \$350 million worth of Botox procedures
- 20,000 breast augmentation surgeries and
- 30,000 liposuction procedures.

The ACCS has also published a patient [factsheet](#) with key questions everyone should ask before undergoing cosmetic surgery.

In April 2018, New South Wales Department of Health issued its [Look Beyond The Surface of Cosmetic Procedures](#) report, recommending tighter regulations of cosmetic procedures and urged consumers to be more cautious of budget deals and amateur practitioners.

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About the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

Established in 1999, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) is a not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary fellowship based body of Cosmetic Surgeons, cosmetic physicians, plastic surgeons, general surgeons, maxillofacial surgeons, dermatologists, ear nose and throat surgeons, ophthalmologists and other doctors and health care practitioners who practice in cosmetic medicine and 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.

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 demonstrated competency specifically in cosmetic medicine and surgery. To become an ACCS Fellow, doctors must typically complete a minimum of 12 years of medical and surgical education and training. For additional information about the ACCS, please visit: <http://www.accs.org.au/>