



AS SEEN IN COSMETIC SURGERY & BEAUTY MAGAZINE



# PETITION FOR SAFETY

THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF COSMETIC SURGERY WELCOMES THE LATEST CALL FOR COSMETIC MEDICINE AND SURGERY REFORMS. LIZZY FOWLER REPORTS.

With the latest statistics revealing Australians spend in excess of \$350 million each year on anti-wrinkle injections alone, and with total expenditure on cosmetic surgical and medical related treatments estimated to be around \$1 billion, it's more important than ever before Australians can rely on their surgeons and practitioners.

Founded in 1999, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) aims to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic surgery and non-surgical procedures to the Australian general community through the supply of appropriately trained and certified medical practitioners. This aim has remained true to the College as, over the last 14 years, it has grown to embrace hundreds of cosmetic specialists from across Australasia and as the popularity of cosmetic procedures in Australia and beyond has sky rocketed.

'Australians should be able to have confidence that the practitioner they choose for their procedure has been appropriately trained,' says College president, Dr Colin

Moore. The College is therefore committed not only to providing the relevant training to cosmetic practitioners, but to raising the standards for patient safety.

The July issue of *Marie Claire* magazine hit Australian news stands with a campaign calling on its readers to sign a petition to the Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek MP to help make cosmetic medical procedures safer.

ACCS president, Dr Colin Moore said he welcomed *Marie Claire's* initiative.

'Cosmetic Medical Practice is a well-defined medical discipline and the ACCS has set the benchmark for training and standards in cosmetic medicine and surgery,' says Dr Moore, who is concerned many Australians routinely, unknowingly undergo cosmetic procedures by a variety of doctors and specialists who may be unable to provide evidence of appropriate, specific education and training.

'Australians should be able to have confidence that the practitioner they choose for their procedure has been

appropriately trained. A lack of recognition exposes the patient to avoidable risks,' Dr Moore warned.

'Our College has also continuously expressed its concern to authorities that there is a misperception in the Australian community that practitioners who may have recognised, specialist qualifications such as plastic surgery are specifically trained in and therefore a "specialist" in cosmetic surgery,' Dr Moore says.

'If a new cosmetic medical specialty is recognised in Australia, then medical colleges will be able to have their training assessed against the requirements of the specialty. It will help remove the confusion about the training and skills of different types of doctors.

'Recognition will ensure that the same high standards applied to other areas of medicine are matched in the training for and provision of cosmetic medicine and surgery. *Marie Claire* and its readers are right to demand nothing less,' adds Dr Moore.

The College has also made a full application to the Australian Medical Council to have Cosmetic Medical Practice recognised as a new Medical Specialty.

The ACCS is the only group in Australia with a single focus on cosmetic surgery and medicine and is the only one to offer formal training and accreditation to its members in both these specialist areas.

One of the key roles of the ACCS is to accredit cosmetic surgeons and physicians – ensuring those who practice cosmetic medicine are sufficiently trained and helping to uphold the high standards Australian patients have come to expect. In fact, to become a Fellow of the ACCS, doctors must complete a minimum of 12 years of medical and surgical education and 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 John Flynn, a spokesperson for the College. 'We also ensure our fellows are participating in continuing education and, where needed, recertification.'

In addition to their annual certification program, the College maintains a procedural register as a resource to prospective patients. 'Not everyone is an expert in every cosmetic procedure,' says Dr Flynn. 'However, if someone is listed on the procedural register, patients can be assured that surgeon has performed at least 100 of those procedures.'

The procedural register isn't the only initiative aimed at reassuring patients and encouraging safe practice. In 2009, the ACCS introduced a Code of Practice – endorsed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) – provide patients with additional reassurance their surgeon or physician meets relevant standards.

'The Code 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,' explains Dr Flynn.

The Code is available for patients to read in full on the College website, alongside another initiative Dr Flynn believes is of significant value to prospective patients. 'Our Patient Information Brochure is also available on the College website to anyone considering a cosmetic procedure,' he says. 'This important resource outlines the things patients should be asking their surgeon, and the information they should expect to receive before deciding to proceed with their treatment. It also gives information on how to lodge and handle a complaint should they need.'

More recently, the ACCS introduced its Code of Practice Seal, which can be displayed by any member who complies with the College's Code of Practice. Launched at the Cosmetex annual conference in 2012, Dr Flynn says the Seal should give patients a sense of confidence about the person they're intending to consult.

As well as reassuring patients, the Seal is also designed to protect those who uphold high ethical standards. 'It protects them through a high level of standards that increase transparency and information,' says Dr Moore.

With the latest census suggesting cosmetic medical practices are growing by as much as 20 to 30 per cent year on year, the significance of a governing body can't be underestimated.

And, as more men and women choose to undergo cosmetic enhancement, initiatives such as the Code of Practice, Code of Practice Seal and Patient Information Brochure provide reassurance the ACCS is fulfilling its commitment to ensuring the safe provision of cosmetic surgery and non-surgical procedures. **csbm**

Scan the QR code below to download the ACCS Patient Information Brochure.

