

# College goes to court seeking accreditation for cosmetic surgeons

- by: KYLAR LOUSSIKIAN
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**A LONG-SIMMERING stoush over the accreditation of cosmetic surgeons as a separate specialty has entered the courtroom, with the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery taking aim at the body charged with recommending new medical specialties.**

The Australian Medical Council invited ACCS to apply for accreditation more than six years ago, and in 2012 an adverse assessment was completed.

ACCS called for an independent review, complaining the assessment relied too heavily on claims made by competing bodies — the widely respected Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and its affiliate the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons — that there was not enough of a distinction from existing specialties.

ACCS wrote it was concerned AMC “had ‘already made up its mind’ before the completion of the assessment”.

A year-long independent review concluded this July that there had not been a problem with the assessment process, but ACCS is taking the AMC to the Federal Court, claiming no “content issues” had been addressed.

The original assessment found there were a variety of training possibilities “suggesting that there is not a comprehensive set of competencies or experience which underpin all cosmetic surgical practice” that wasn’t comprehensively covered by the ASPS, which opposed the application on the ground that the specialty already existed within its program.

“Cosmetic surgery is not a new specialty. The existing specialty of plastic surgery already encompasses all reconstructive and cosmetic (aesthetic) procedures and the training for this existing specialty is world class”, ASPS president Tony Kane said.

But ACCS points to a 2002 document prepared by AMC that found the College of Surgeons board was “endeavouring to maintain trainee exposure to cosmetic surgery”.

That, according to Daniel Fleming, a spokesman and past president of ACCS, is not enough.

Dr Fleming said many past applications for specialty recognition weren't initially approved and he accepted this, but it was important there was confidence in a "fair and proper process".

"We want to know what specific inquiries the AMC has made about cosmetic surgery, and I submit they haven't done any or they aren't telling us what it is," he said.

He said the medical accreditation and training industry had long been monopolistic.

The independent review, written by Robert Wells, deputy chief executive of the Sax Institute, concedes it did not consider what were considered "professional issues", including those about the distinction of fields.

But it did note that one of the criteria for recognition of a speciality was its public health significance.

"The point of differentiation for cosmetic medical practice in the college's submissions has been that in fact this specialty deals with healthy rather than ill patients," Mr Wells writes.

But Dr Fleming said knowing who was accredited and qualified as a cosmetic surgeon would protect the public.

"Everybody knows there isn't any proper training or qualification (to practice cosmetic surgery) inside the existing specialties including plastic surgery, it's ad hoc."

The AMC declined to comment citing ongoing court action. The matter will next be heard early next month.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/college-goes-to-court-seeking-accreditation-for-cosmetic-surgeons/story-e6frgcjx-1227097725964>



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