



## The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

*Raising Standards, Protecting Patients*

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Naughty or nice, cosmetic surgery's not for Christmas**

### ***Santa's checking twice to see cosmetic surgery not on his list***

The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery today warned against giving cosmetic surgery as a gift for Christmas and against cosmetic surgery tourism. "There's no place for Cosmetic medical and surgical procedures under the Christmas tree," ACCS President Dr Soo-Keat Lim said today.

"Cosmetic medical and surgical procedures can and do provide both men and women greater self-confidence, and self-esteem. However well-meaning, a gift of this kind could have the opposite affect and undermine a person's self-esteem.

"Having a cosmetic procedure can help you look and feel the way you want to be. But deciding whether to have a procedure is a very person decision; it shouldn't be about confirming someone else's beauty ideal."

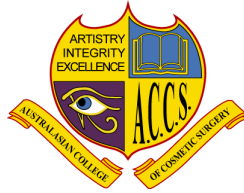
"And all surgery including cosmetic surgery carries risk and should not be considered lightly or under any pressure," Dr Lim said.

"Gift vouchers and time-sensitive discounts to induce people to have cosmetic surgery or other medical treatments, is inappropriate," Dr Lim said.

These time-limited discounts are expressly prohibited by the College's Code of Practice and the Medical Board of Australia's advertising guidelines.

The College is also particularly concerned about the growth of cosmetic tourism.

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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.

The College considers these approaches to be contrary to good medical practice and to the ACCS's Code of Practice, Commonwealth laws and ethical-professional guidelines.

"A patient's first consultation should never be with a non-medical booking agent who is not qualified to properly explain the risks and benefits at an initial consultation when these considerations should be considered," Dr Lim warned.

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 which include:

- Increased risk of complications, infection and impacts on general health particularly with older people where complications are more likely to occur;
- Though there are qualified and skilled doctors practicing in developing countries, it is difficult to assess their qualifications and training;
- It is difficult if not impossible to have a consultation beforehand with surgeon in distant country;
- Follow-up care opportunity is reduced including continuity of care protocols;
- Travel and surgery don't mix – flight risk due to increased post-operative DVT incidence during flight;
- Revision work may be needed, which increases risk and costs to patient and potentially to the public health care system;
- Increased risk of unsatisfactory results – it is very difficult to seek redress, legally or through other forums such as state health board or complaints commissions; and
- Australian Anaesthetists are among the best in the world and reduce the risk of complications arising from anaesthesia.

The ACCS introduced a Code of Practice which bans such practices as time sensitive coupons and discounts for cosmetic surgery. The Code, which was authorised by the ACCC, has been in operation for two years. The new Commonwealth medical advertising guidelines now also ban such marketing practices.

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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 considering looking for a cosmetic medical or surgical practitioner, look for the ACCS Seal and Code of Practice Seal.



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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 field of Cosmetic Medical Practice.

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.

The College seeks to work cooperatively with government and other stakeholders to improve standards and safety and to educate health care consumers. Its Fellows and spokespeople are regularly quoted in the media and consulted by Commonwealth and state health and consumer regulators as authoritative sources of information and expert opinion.