

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2022

Response to Ahpra report on cosmetic surgery by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS), and the Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgeons (ASOHNS).

Specialist surgeons were briefed on the findings of the cosmetic surgery review by Ahpra and the Medical Board of Australia and said that while there were some worthwhile improvements proposed they needed further clarification.

“Ahpra has proposed a new area of endorsement practice for cosmetic surgery. A fundamental tenet that any reform must acknowledge is the inadequacy of surgical training by a number of practitioners performing cosmetic surgery.

“Any grandfathering of existing cosmetic surgeons would need to be carefully considered under the new endorsement framework as some unscrupulous operators may continue to operate. It would also take years to implement. What can be done quickly is to restrict the title of surgeon to those who are registered in a surgical speciality. We understand that health ministers will be meeting on Friday. It is time that they made this important reform.

“If we are truly to protect patients, we must make sure that surgical procedures are only undertaken by properly qualified surgeons who have Australian Medical Council (AMC) accreditation. This must be made mandatory. We have to be unequivocal when it comes to patient safety,” says Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) President Dr Sally Langley.

Associate Professor Nicola Dean, the President of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), said that the Australian Medical Council has excellent standards for training in surgery and all Australians should expect to be entitled to those standards of care.

“The AMC has as part of its written purpose a mandate to protect the health of the community. This should be reason enough for the relevant regulatory and government entities to ban anyone that does not have surgical training that is AMC accredited from performing surgery.”

Ahpra also proposed a crackdown on advertising by enforcing a ban on testimonials that are misleading and deceptive.

“Lifting the ban on testimonials will simply worsen the exploitation of vulnerable people.

“The financial penalties for misconduct proposed by Ahpra may also be inconsequential for rogue doctors.

“We urge the regulator to step up to increase oversight and regulation to eliminate dangerous practices that harm patients,” said Professor Ray Sacks, the President of the Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgeons (ASOHNS).

Dr Robert Sheen, the President of Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS) said that many so-called ‘cosmetic surgeons’ used various training programs as proof of their expertise, but some of these programs required almost no specific surgical training.

“Surgeons in any area of speciality must have training in both the technique and in surgical safety, ethics, patient care, risk mitigation, anatomy, and hands-on supervised experience. Cosmetic surgery should be held to the same standard as any invasive surgery - it's what keeps them safe.

“AMC accredited training is necessary to protect patients, and this is why every other medical profession requires AMC accredited training as a measure of standards and a requirement to use the title of ‘surgeon’.”

Ends.

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RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialities in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Urology and Vascular Surgery. www.surgeons.org