

MEDIA STATEMENT

Tuesday 8 March 2022

Review of the regulation of health practitioners in cosmetic surgery welcomed

The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery and Medicine (ACCSM) welcomes the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Medical Board of Australia's public consultation review into the regulation of the cosmetic surgery sector.

The consultation process is now open until 14 April 2022 and [the review](#) is expected to be published by mid-2022. It is looking at what actions will better protect patients undergoing cosmetic surgery.

It is estimated that half a million Australians spend \$1 billion per year on cosmetic surgery, more per capita than in the United States. Such rapid growth has attracted practitioners from all areas of medical practice, many of whom are inadequately trained in cosmetic surgery and whose practice poses a risk to the public.

Accordingly, ACCSM President Dr Patrick Tansley said the current system allowed any doctor to call themselves a cosmetic surgeon and patients could not easily identify whether or not a doctor had the necessary specific training to be competent and safe.

"Currently, any medical practitioner can call themselves a cosmetic surgeon. Some have received adequate cosmetic surgery training, others have not, which results in a lottery for patients which puts them at risk," Dr Tansley said.

"The ACCSM is calling for the introduction of a national accreditation standard in cosmetic surgery for all doctors who perform it. No such standard currently exists. The new standard would sit alongside creation of a public register of practitioners who have met and maintain the standard. The College has been working with AHPRA towards implementing an Endorsement model for cosmetic surgery, as a pragmatic and effective way of accrediting practitioners who wish to practise in the field."

"Endorsement to practise cosmetic surgery would be easily implemented as a mechanism already exists under Section 98 of the current National Law. It would result in a significant reduction in the number of botched cosmetic procedures taking place each year, as all practitioners wishing to practise in this field will be forced to undergo specific training and demonstrate specific competency before being Endorsed to do so, thereafter being able to use the title 'cosmetic surgeon'."

"This will empower patients to distinguish who is, from who is not, properly trained and safe to perform cosmetic surgery. If patients are to be protected, then all doctors performing cosmetic surgical procedures must have core surgical training and specific cosmetic surgical competence such that patients can identify them easily. This is the very purpose of our accreditation and Endorsement proposal to practise cosmetic surgery in Australia".

"All competent surgeons providing cosmetic surgery who are concerned about patient safety should welcome its introduction.

“Such a solution would protect patients *before* something goes wrong and would facilitate AHPRA taking action more readily against doctors who may be practising outside of their scope of practice.”

Australia currently has three types of medical practitioners who practise cosmetic surgery:

1. Professional cosmetic surgeons. Fellowship of the ACCSM requires mandatory postgraduate core surgical training and experience **followed by two years mandatory** dedicated cosmetic surgical training and examinations.
2. Plastic surgeons – with an **optional six months** dedicated cosmetic surgical training in addition to postgraduate training in reconstructive plastic surgery.
3. GPs and specialists with skills in other fields – ‘cosmetic surgeons’ who have **zero** mandated cosmetic surgical training and variable postgraduate surgical training and experience.

The introduction of an AHPRA register of medical practitioners Endorsed in cosmetic surgery will allow patients to identify which of these doctors is actually trained, competent and safe to perform cosmetic procedures.

Data published to the current Senate Inquiry in late 2021 showed that in the 3 years to June 2021, AHPRA received 313 complaints relating to cosmetic procedures. The complaints related to 183 practitioners, of whom more than half (52 per cent [96/183]), were surgeons holding Australian Medical Council - accredited specialist surgical registration. Of these specialist surgeons, the majority (71 per cent [68/96]) were specialist plastic surgeons.

The skills needed for cosmetic surgery differ significantly from those for reconstructive plastic surgery. Cosmetic surgery is undertaken to change appearance of healthy tissue, not to reconstruct the aftermath of disease or injury.

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About the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery & Medicine

Established as the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery in 1999, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery & Medicine (ACCSM) is a not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary fellowship-based body of cosmetic surgeons, cosmetic physicians, plastic surgeons, general surgeons, maxillofacial surgeons, 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 ACCSM is to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic medical and cosmetic surgical procedures to the Australian community through the supply of appropriately trained and certified health care practitioners. The ACCSM 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. For additional information about the ACCSM, please visit: <http://www.accsm.org.au/>