

Media Release



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Suite 503, Level 5, 69 Christie Street
St Leonards NSW 2065
Tel +61 2 9437 0495
Fax +61 2 9437 9609
1300 027 277
aestheticplasticsurgeons.org.au

Doctors who use fabricated titles put patient safety at risk

The Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS) President, Dr Naveen Somia, said patient lives are at risk when doctors indulge in false and misleading advertising using fake and fabricated titles to confuse and deceive the patient.

The statement comes following the news that a Melbourne doctor who is not registered with Australia's National Medical Regulator, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has vowed to continue treating patients in defiance of the law as she believes she has been appropriately trained in other countries and by the medical device companies whose treatments she administers.

The AHPRA has rules in place to keep the public safe. The most important safeguard is the official AHPRA titling system that has a title for every doctor which is a true and accurate reflection of doctor's training, competency and legitimate registration status.

"Over the past few years, Australians have been shocked and horrified at the 'third-world style' botched jobs happening in their backyard. These include death, disfigurement, blindness, illegal importation of counterfeit Schedule 4 drugs, surgical operations performed in a Sydney apartment, surgical operations performed in unlicensed facilities, foreign tourists performing surgical procedures, surgical operations performed by overseas doctors who are not registered as surgeons in Australia and severe complications such as cardiac arrests and punctured lung following routine operations. It is really sad to see that a small minority of doctors feel that these rules don't apply to them and continue to use fake and fabricated titles to confuse the patients.

According to AHPRA's website *"It is important that the use of a title does not lead a consumer to believe the practitioner holds specialist registration or an endorsement they do not hold, or imply that the practitioner is more highly skilled or qualified than another practitioner with the same type of registration."*

To protect patients from false and misleading advertising, doctors should not be allowed to use fabricated non- AHPRA titles.

Dr Somia said, thankfully, the Federal and State Health Ministers have now acknowledged this issue. Under the instruction of the Federal Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, the state and territory Health Ministers have agreed to restrict the use of the title Surgeon as its use by non-specialist surgeons can confuse members of the public.

The communique from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) November meeting stated, *"The use of the title "surgeon", including by way of "cosmetic surgeon", by medical practitioners, non-specialist surgeons or those without other appropriate specific training can cause confusion among members of the public."*

A recent survey commissioned by ASAPS through McNair yellow Squares of 2,000 Australians found that 93 per cent of Australians agree that it would be easier for patients to separate the surgeons from the doctors if medical professionals were only to use their AHPRA. Further, 86 per cent of Australians agree it is wrong that doctors without any surgical training are allowed to call themselves surgeons.

"The use of fabricated titles does nothing but confuses the patient and misleads them," Dr Somia said.

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Media contact: Julia Power, National PR and Marketing Manager, 0414 276 990