



Plastic Surgery & Cosmetic Clinic

PRESS RELEASE

An avalanche of adverse publicity has recently buried cosmetic surgery in controversy. The media's focus has been the singular lack of qualifications and competence of some individuals in this field. The recent New South Wales Ministerial Inquiry into Cosmetic Surgery recommended legislation restricting cosmetic surgery to Fellows of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons. In Queensland, the Medical Board has begun prosecuting anyone labelling themselves a surgeon without that specialist qualification. In recent weeks, "A Current Affair" focused upon the Gold Coast, and reported mismanagement by an untrained "cosmetic surgery advisor" and a general practitioner attempting to perform breast augmentation. The unfortunate lady's operation was a golf competition prize! On the Sunshine Coast, no general practitioner has yet been able to secure operating privileges for cosmetic surgery at any local hospital. Attempts by a University of Karachi(India)-trained general practitioner, sponsored by a recently established local cosmetic clinic, have now failed.

The Sunshine Coast's most senior resident plastic surgeon, Dr Mark McGovern, today struck out at such unprofessional practices, saying "Unqualified doctors should not practice cosmetic surgery or cosmetic medicine. Cosmetic surgery is probably the most demanding and technically challenging of any specialty, even more so than brain surgery or open heart surgery. This is because there is nothing medically wrong with the patient to begin with, so that the onus lies heavily upon the practitioner to first do no harm. Plastic Surgeons alone have comprehensive training and qualifications in cosmetic surgery, not to mention the underlying sciences of anatomy, wound healing, skin biology, laser physics and so on. It takes an average 15 years to become a plastic surgeon, and 6 years to become a general practitioner. This knowledge base ideally equips the plastic surgeon to provide both surgical and non-surgical means of cosmetic enhancement, to assess their risks and benefits and to separate the substance from the hype."

Cosmetic medicine, the field of non-surgical cosmetic treatments, is now subject to the same problems as cosmetic surgery. Dr McGovern explained "A recently established local cosmetic clinic is a partnership between a dentist or oral surgeon and a radiologist or X-ray specialist. Neither has any training or qualifications in cosmetic surgery or cosmetic medicine. The dentist has spoken about his financial motivation in setting up the clinic to the doctors magazine "Money in Practice". This is a recipe for disaster. Indeed, several of that clinic's cosmetic treatments are fraught with risks for the consumer."

Finally, Dr McGovern drew attention to the activities of the very same recently established cosmetic clinic in the even more demanding field of cosmetic surgery. The same nurse using Restylane without any certification is also providing consultations regarding cosmetic surgery operations such as liposuction and tummy-tucks! Patients are then sent to Brisbane, where surgery is performed by the same University of Karachi-trained general practitioner whose applications to Sunshine Coast hospitals were rejected! "Just last week," said Dr McGovern, "a patient expressed her 'absolute disgust' at being sent by this clinic all the way to Brisbane to see a 'dreadful G.P.' regarding her liposuction and abdominoplasty, only to discover that a plastic surgeon practiced two doors away". Only one Brisbane hospital will currently allow general practitioners to perform cosmetic surgery. The newly-installed Director of Operations at that hospital is understandably concerned by the situation. Following consultation with the Queensland Society of Plastic Surgeons, he has taken the highly unusual decision to refer the matter to the Medical Board of Queensland for their opinion!

What does all this mean for the consumer? As Dr McGovern said "One would not expect a dentist or a radiologist to know of these problems, but then one would not expect them to run a cosmetic clinic, especially one brauding itself 'professional'. The professionals in cosmetic enhancement are plastic surgeons. As a plastic surgeon, I am the guardian of my patients self-esteem, and value that trust and that responsibility. This dental and x-ray cosmetic clinic values something else." Dr McGovern concluded "If I seek anything in this, it is not for myself but for my profession of plastic surgery and the professionalism with which it serves the public. On the Sunshine Coast, the two resident plastic surgeons are Dr Lee Brown and myself, Dr Mark McGovern. Lee offers cosmetic surgery, fruit acid skin peels, and Restylane injections. My Sunshine Coast Plastic Surgery and Cosmetic Clinic offers all of these and in addition Collagen, DermaLive and Botox injection, trichloroacetic acid skin peels, skin care programmes, laser vein removal and laser hair removal. All of our procedures adhere to the highest possible standards. Let the buyer beware!"

PRESS RELEASE DATE 5/3/01

As featured in the print media and on "TODAY TONIGHT" television, March 2001.