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30th September 2008.

Dear John,

Re: Sir John Monash Private Hospital accreditation of surgical registrars

I have been operating weekly at Sir John Monash Private Hospital in Melbourne as a fully accredited Plastic and Cosmetic Surgeon for the last 9 years.

I am a Fellow of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery and am an accredited trainer of doctors in the College's surgical training programme. These trainees are fully qualified medical practitioners who have been accepted onto the College's advanced specialist training programme. As is necessary for their training, the trainees are accredited as surgical assistants by each of the hospitals in which I operate, including Sir John Monash.

In August 2007 the trainee at that time, Dr Mark Attalla, was accredited in this capacity at Sir John Monash Private Hospital. The day after a meeting of the hospital's Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), Mr Tony Buffuno (a co-owner of the hospital) spoke to me and told me Dr Attalla's surgical assisting accreditation was being removed immediately and he could no longer continue his training with me at the hospital. He explained that the MAC had decided that no trainees of "non-AMC recognised" Colleges would now be accredited. There was no suggestion that Dr Attalla had breached practice guidelines but merely that he did not belong to Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), currently the only AMC recognised surgical College. Neither I nor Dr Attalla was forewarned that this issue was to be discussed at the MAC meeting and therefore we had no opportunity to have any input to the process. No concerns had ever been raised about previous trainees. It was simply presented as a fait accompli.

Why should the hospital suddenly take this action, the effect of which was to sabotage the training programme of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, training which is designed to raise standards and protect cosmetic surgery patients? I note that the surgical representatives on the hospital's MAC are all members of the RACS and those who perform cosmetic surgery are also members of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons. Both of these organisations have a long history of vehement opposition to the ACCS and its training programme even though their own qualification has not been assessed nor is it recognised specifically for cosmetic surgery.

Unless and until the AMC creates a new specialty which will permit other College's, and indeed the RACS, to apply for recognition, patients will continue to suffer the consequences of this kind of feudalistic behaviour which is designed not to protect patients but to protect the RACS and its members.

Yours faithfully

Paul Rosenberg