

25.03.25

250–290 Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002 Australia
Telephone +61 3 9249 1200

ABN 29 004 167 766

Dr Danielle McMullen
President
Australian Medical Association
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: ama@ama.com.au; president@ama.com.au

Dear Dr McMullen,

Re: AMA Advocacy on the Risks of Telehealth-Driven Cosmetic Prescribing

I am writing to you on behalf of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) to inform you of our concern about the misuse of telehealth to prescribe cosmetic injectables. The media has reported that some corporate providers are providing telehealth consultations in mere seconds and then issuing prescriptions, an approach far short of our professional expectations and which may compromise patient safety.

While RACS is not engaged in fee-setting and health financing policy, we are concerned with the implications of such an approach for standards of medicine and patient care. Our profession holds the view that all medical practitioners, including surgeons, should provide a full examination, address patient questions, apply treatment, and follow up as appropriate, whether the consultation is face-to-face or by telehealth. Any process which violates these principles of practicing medicine poses a risk not only to individual patients but to the integrity of our healthcare system.

Apart from fraud and inappropriate prescribing risks, there is an even larger systemic risk. The recent injection of \$9 billion into Medicare to reduce out-of-pocket spending risks solidifying the payment incentives for short, low-value consults. The design deficiency of Medicare's payment model, founded upon instances of service rather than quality of outcome, is being compounded by the political lead up to a Federal election. This incentive to maximize bulk billing at the expense of ensuring actual clinical value presents a risk. This problem does not stop with surgical practice and, in our opinion, sits more within the AMA's scope.

We believe the AMA is in the best position to lead on this matter, and RACS would be pleased to provide an endorsement on an appropriately drafted response. Considering the serious risks attached to the existing trend in telehealth prescribing, particularly in the cosmetic injectable and medical cannabis markets, we urge the AMA to take a strong stance to ensure that medical consultations of whatever form are at the professional and ethical standards of all medical profession.

We value the opportunity to collaborate on this matter and look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

A/PROF KERIN FIELDING
PRESIDENT
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Committed to
Indigenous health

