



RACS launches Action Plan to build respect, improve patient safety

Monday 30 November, 2015

An overhaul of complaints management, fundamental shifts in surgical education and a commitment to respect and collaboration are the cornerstones of an Action Plan announced today by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

The Action Plan details a comprehensive, multi-year program of work designed to promote respect, counter discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery, and improve patient safety.

It features:

- a review and restructure of the RACS complaints management system, introducing external, expert and independent review and oversight of RACS complaint processes, together with a clear sanctions policy
- education for all Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates in appropriate workplace behaviours, showing respect, and countering discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment; also mandatory training in effective teaching for everyone involved in surgical education
- a commitment to collaboration and information sharing with employers in the public and private sectors, to more effectively deal with discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

The RACS Action Plan sets eight goals, so the College can monitor its progress and make sure that its actions make a difference.

The goals include embracing diversity and fostering gender equity, increasing transparency, independent scrutiny and external accountability, building a culture of respect and collaboration in surgical practice and education.

The Action Plan translates the recommendations of the RACS-appointed Expert Advisory Group (EAG) into work that will be prioritised and phased. RACS will be reporting publicly each year on what has been achieved.

RACS President, Professor David Watters said the EAG report marked a milestone in the history of the College and sets some serious challenges.

“We will need to work hard to close the gap between where we are now and where we want to be, and this Action Plan shows how we will do this,” Professor Watters said.

The RACS Action Plan will bring significant, but necessary changes to the culture of the health workplace and surgical training, he said.

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“We must do some things differently, deal with the behaviours we have said we will not tolerate and champion those that will help build a respectful, collaborative culture,” he said.

In September 2015, the EAG published its report into discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery.

RACS has accepted the recommendations of the EAG in full, apologised to everyone who had suffered from discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in surgery and committed the College to a comprehensive response.

“There must be no tolerance of inappropriate behaviours that result from lack of respect for others and have no place in the future of our proud profession.

“We can meet the challenges facing our profession at this pivotal moment and build a safer, more respectful workplace.

“This will result in better standards of surgical training, and higher quality patient care,” Professor Watters said.

The RACS Action Plan and the EAG Report into discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery can be found here on the RACS website. <http://www.surgeons.org/about/dbsh/>

About RACS

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

www.surgeons.org

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