MEDIA RELEASE

Wise choices and futile surgery on the agenda at the Queensland Annual State Meeting

Friday 18 August, 2017

To operate, or not to operate… that is the question, or rather, it is one of the questions in the decision making process for both surgeon and patient. Dr Will Cairns, Clinical Lead for Queensland’s Statewide Strategy for care at the end of life, and past Director of the Townsville Palliative Care Service will be tackling this subject on Sunday 20 August at this weekend’s Queensland Annual State Meeting in Palm Cove.

Dr Cairns’ presentation, which will consider the goals and expectations of patients alongside what can be reasonably offered by the surgeon, will cover topics such as quality/quantity of life versus risk and potential complications, futile surgery, and managing uncertainty and probability in the face of new surgical technologies.

“In spite of our success in delaying death through disease prevention and treatment, maximum life-expectancy has not increased even though median life-expectancy has doubled. Because we have been so successful at delaying death we now find ourselves dealing with growing numbers of elderly people, and others of any age, with complex multisystem disorders who present for assessment and consideration of treatment.

“We need to explore the patient’s values, goals, hopes and wishes as a vital part of our decision-making, in addition to finding ways to explain the balance of probabilities that adequately describes the delicate balance of hope and risk that will ultimately shape operative choices,” he said.

Dr Cairns, whose interests are in ensuring appropriate care at the end of life as a core goal of the health care system, says that the promotion of advanced care planning and the education of the community is imperative so that it is better able to deal with the normality and inevitability of death.

Up to 100 surgical Fellows, Trainees and Associates will meet at the Pullman Palm Cove Sea Temple resort and Spa this weekend for a series of presentations and discussions across a broad range of surgical issues.

For more information about the 2017 RACS Combined Queensland Annual State Meeting & Surgical Directors Section Leadership Forum please visit: https://www.surgeons.org/about/regions/queensland/#Meetings

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (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.

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