



Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Incorporated ABN 29 454 001 424

ASO rejects Medicare rort claims

Monday 16 January 2012

The Australian Society of Ophthalmologists today dismissed claims individual eye surgeons routinely performed 20 cataract removals daily.

Responding to an article by Dr Tony Webber in the January edition of the Medical Journal of Australia*, ASO President Dr Arthur Karagiannis said the figure of 20 cataract surgeries daily was not supported by any substantiated data.

“Advances in technology over the last 20 years have made cataract surgery a procedure which delivers very safe predictable and excellent outcomes for patients,” Dr Karagiannis said.

“But it is misleading to suggest eye surgeons perform 20 cataract procedures per day when the average is closer to four to five per week,”

Dr Karagiannis said the delivery of high-quality ophthalmic care was expensive as demonstrated by the 2011 ‘Ophthalmology Practice Costs Study’ conducted for the ASO by Access Economics.

“Medicare rebates do not cover the cost of providing ophthalmic services and as a result patients incur out of pocket expenses,” he said.

“There have now been 3 significant downward revisions to the Medicare rebate for cataract surgery over the last 20 years.

“Figures quoted by Dr Webber for the surgeon's fee for cataract surgery are extreme, not the norm and I sincerely doubt anyone would charge this.

“In contrast by his own admission Dr Webber relied on unsubstantiated ‘personal extrapolation’ of a small sample to arrive at his conclusions.

“Even acting Health Minister Nicola Roxon has distanced herself from his claims on the basis the Professional Services Review he headed only had oversight of the clinical practices of a small minority of doctors referred to it by Medicare Australia.

“If the practices across the whole medical profession were on the scale he claims one wonders why he didn’t bother to raise them when he was chair of the PSR rather than wait until he had relinquished that office?”

Ends.

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* 'What is wrong with Medicare' 16 January 2012 by Dr Tony Webber.

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