



**Australasian
Foundation for
Plastic Surgery**

MEDIA ALERT – embargoed until 6am 24th April

Boston-based face transplant pioneer to speak at Plastic Surgery Congress

Were he not in Melbourne to deliver the Foundation BK Rank Lecture* at the Plastic Surgery Congress, US plastic surgeon and face transplant pioneer Dr Julian Pribaz would be working alongside his colleagues treating injuries sustained in the Boston Marathon bomb attacks.

Born in Italy but raised and educated in Melbourne, Dr Pribaz is one of the world-leaders in face transplant surgery, a new and extremely complicated procedure involving multiple specialists on two operating teams – one for the donor and one for the recipient – that work simultaneously to transfer tissue from the donor's face to the patient's, as opposed to the more traditional method of transferring tissue from one part of the patient's body to their face.

Dr Pribaz and his Harvard Medical School affiliated team at Brigham and Woman's Hospital in Boston have performed five facial transplants including the US' first full facial transplant on Dallas Wiens – a man who suffered severe electrical burns that practically left him 'without a face'.

Another patient, Charla Nash, underwent a face transplant after she suffered extensive injuries when she was mauled by a pet chimpanzee.

Aside from the risks on the operating table, there are numerous psychological factors that need to be considered in this complicated procedure. Candidates must undergo an extensive vetting process to ensure they will be able to adjust to life with a completely new face.

"Post transplant the patient does not look like they used to and they do not look like the donor – seeing yourself with a completely new face is life-changing. It's not like these patients developed a problem and the next day decided to have a face transplant – most of them have been living with their problem for years and some would have forgotten what they used to look like. To look normal, even human, is an amazing experience," explains Dr Pribaz.

Founded in 1970, the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons Inc (ASPS) is the peak body for Specialist Plastic Surgeons (both reconstructive and cosmetic). The Society's main role is to protect the integrity of plastic surgery as a specialty.



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“While there have been many significant advances in the last 30 years, there are still some very difficult defects that simply cannot be repaired by conventional methods – with that in mind I will be discussing the new and exciting concepts that have evolved to do facial transplantations,” says Dr Pribaz.

Dr Pribaz’s lecture is sponsored by the Australasian Foundation for Plastic Surgery which will be launched at the Plastic Surgery Congress. The Foundation has been established to support quality health outcomes for everyone involved with Plastic Surgery. Its mission is to support excellence, safety and integrity in plastic surgery with programmes focuses on key areas of innovation, research, skills and outreach.

(*The BK Rank Lecture is held in honour of Sir Benjamin Keith Rank, a world leader in the field of plastic surgery and considered by many to be the father of plastic surgery in Australia. He commanded the plastic surgical unit as part of the royal Australasian Army Medical Corps in World War 2, returning to Australia to set up a plastic and maxillofacial unit at Heidelberg Military Hospital. He spent time overseas and was instrumental in setting up the specialty of plastic surgery in India. He was President of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons in 1965 and President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons from 1966 – 1968).

What: Plastic Surgery Congress (hosted by the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons and the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons)

Where: Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre, Southbank

When: 24th – 27th April, 2013

For media enquires regarding the Congress, the Australasian Foundation for Plastic Surgery or to arrange an interview with Dr Pribaz:

Contact: Edwina Gatenby on 0402 130 254 or Shannon Swainston on 0478 053 684.

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