

October 9, 2020

Jeff Zucker, Chairman, WarnerMedia News and Sports & President, CNN Worldwide
Jake Tapper, CNN Anchor and Washington Chief Correspondent
One CNN Center
Atlanta, GA 30303, USA

Dear Mr. Zucker and Mr. Tapper,

On October 2, Mr. Tapper insinuated on-air that oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) are not “real doctors.” This comment was offensive and derogatory to members of the American College of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (ACOMS). It was inaccurate and has potential to cause harm to the public as well as to practicing surgeons.

On behalf of my esteemed colleagues, I am requesting a written apology to ACOMS and an on-air retraction and apology to oral and maxillofacial surgeons for asserting that OMSs are not “real doctors”.

Mr. Tapper made the following statement on *The Lead* at 4:08 PM ET on Friday, October 2, 2020:

Now that Trump has tested positive and is showing some symptoms according to the White House – although we have yet to hear from a doctor from the White House, I should note, and that is needed. A real doctor and not a [sic] oral surgeon.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, appearing onscreen with Tapper, and who is intimately involved in training OMSs in Atlanta, should know better but failed to correct the remark.

Mr. Tapper’s comment on a widely-viewed platform may cause patients to withhold trust in their surgeon and delay seeking much-needed and potentially lifesaving care. Furthermore, it disparaged frontline medical workers who have been risking their lives every day since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. OMSs are amongst the healthcare workers at highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 secondary to aerosolization of the virus.

There are currently over 8,000 practicing oral and maxillofacial surgeons in America’s healthcare system. They all complete extensive training including a four to six year postgraduate residency. OMSs receive training in surgery, medicine, critical care, anesthesia, and dentistry and perform major corrective jaw surgeries and diagnose and treat complex head and neck cancer, cleft lip and palette, TMJ (jaw) joint pain, facial trauma, sleep apnea, and much more. OMSs are highly trained in all aspects of administering anesthesia, to include airway management. As such, OMSs are well-versed in respiratory conditions such as that occur in COVID-19 infections.

ACOMS is disappointed in Mr. Tapper’s thoughtless, insulting, and unnecessary comment, and in Dr. Gupta for remaining silent. Again, beyond the insult, there is the possibility that viewers placing trust in statements by Mr. Tapper would be harmed by adhering to his statement that their oral surgeon is not a “real doctor.” A comment such as this from a senior international journalist undermines our specialty,

public trust, and CNN's accountability. Please feel free to contact me. I would welcome a conversation about the amazing work that we do on a daily basis.

I look forward to learning your response to our requests.

Sincerely,



Kevin L. Rieck, DDS, MD, FACS

President, The American College of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons