

For release: Sunday 14 November 2010

Let's beat diabetes World Diabetes Day: it's all about education and prevention

Education about type 2 diabetes and taking steps now to prevent this chronic lifestyle disease is the best approach to reducing its prevalence across the country, says Australian General Practice Network Chair, Dr Emil Djakic.

"It's World Diabetes Day **Sunday November 14**, the theme being *education and prevention* and it's an opportunity to remind the Australian community that the choice of lifestyle factors *today* can very much influence the quality of life of potential type 2 diabetes patients in years to come," said Dr Djakic.

"World-wide over 300 million people are affected by type 2 diabetes, in Australia that figure is one million, a figure predicted to increase significantly in the next 10 to 15 years due to the nation's obesity epidemic.

"Type 2 diabetes leads to serious complications including:

- heart disease
- kidney failure
- impaired vision
- circulation problems.

"There is no cure for this condition and once diagnosed it leads to a lifetime of managing the condition daily with lifestyle changes and often with medical intervention including doses of insulin. There is a solid body of international evidence showing even small changes like weight loss, physical activity and healthy eating lowers the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and for those at risk, making these changes can decrease the risk by up to 58 percent.

"A key factor in reducing the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is identifying the risk of developing the condition to start with. To assess the risk, patients can utilise the AUSDRISK tool which is available through their local general practice or online. It's a simple do-it-yourself questionnaire which helps to determine if lifestyle changes are needed now to avoid the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

"Patients with an intermediate or high score should see their family doctor, who may refer patients to a Lifestyle Modification Program [LMP] which is a subsidised program for 40-49 year olds and 15-54 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The LMP is a six month group education and prevention program for which provides information about diabetes, the risk factors, the importance of regular screening and examining the lifestyle changes that may be needed, like losing weight, getting more exercise and better nutrition, to reduce the onset of type 2 diabetes.

"If we are to ensure a healthy population for Australia's future, we need to be addressing the burden of diabetes now. The logical option is to focus our efforts on prevention," said Dr Djakic.

To access the AUSDRISK tool go to the New Lease of Life website: www.newleaseoflife.com.au

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