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Junior Doctors Better at Battle of the Bulge

Today's young doctors are better equipped and more willing to tackle the obesity epidemic in Australia than previous generations of medical professionals, a Brisbane conference will be told next week.

Melbourne-trained doctor and global health specialist Dr Alessandro Demaio will tell the 2018 Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland Junior Doctor Conference that millennial doctors had greater understanding of the impact of food and nutrition on health compared with their predecessors.

"Obesity is core business for doctors today," Dr Demaio said.

"Patients expect their doctors to be knowledgeable in this area. If they can't get the information they're seeking from their doctor, they will go to a shady source instead.

"Likewise, young doctors are accustomed to using social media and other forms of technology to keep across trends, research and treatments and they know their patients are better informed than ever before."

Dr Demaio, aged 33, said millennial doctors would need to call on State and Federal Governments to follow the lead of other countries and treat obesity as a public health issue that required wide-ranging policy changes.

"About 35 per cent of Australians are obese compared with about 11 per cent of people in Norway and Denmark, despite the fact we share similar genetics," he said.

"This is because governments in Norway and Denmark provide early childhood education around food and deliver prevention programs for people at risk of diseases like diabetes. They learn how to cook healthy meals and are offered exercise classes."

Dr Demaio said almost every home was located within about 200 metres of a small supermarket, enabling every person regardless of socio-economic status to have access to affordable healthy food options near home.

"These are clever social, urban, health and education policies that treat lifestyle-related conditions like obesity as a society-wide problem," he said.

"In Australia, however, we fat shame individuals for being overweight or obese.

"Certainly, we have a level of agency over our weight as individuals, but we need changes to occur in government if we are to really tackle this issue."

Dr Demaio will be in Brisbane to address the 2018 AMA Queensland Junior Doctor Conference as part of a nation-wide tour for his new book, *The Doctor's Diet*, which provides advice on nutrition and health.

A qualified doctor who trained at The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne before completing a Master in Public Health, Dr Demaio is the co-founder of NCDFREE, a global social movement against non-communicable diseases .

He is also a host on ABC's weekly program *Ask the Doctor* which will return to TV screens in September, 2018.

The fifth annual AMA Queensland Junior Doctor Conference, which will be held at Brisbane's Hilton Hotel on 23-24 June, will also feature:

- A panel discussion on the challenges and solutions for improving the mental health of junior doctors
- Presentations on the use of 3D printing and virtual reality in medicine, and
- The 'Simulympics' – a doctors test their skills in a simulated medical emergency.

**MEDIA CONTACTS: Tammy Shipperley, Sequel PR – 0403 090 914 or 07 3251 8111;
Chiara Lesèvre, AMA Queensland - 0419 735 641 or 07 3872 2209.**