

MEDIA RELEASE EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01AM, WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE 2018

“If there’s one check every adult should have it’s the HbA1c”: Diabetes Australia calls for wider blood testing to arrest epidemic

++Vision opportunity: Politicians receiving diabetes blood tests in Parliament House++

CANBERRA: Health groups are calling for more Australians to have a HbA1c blood test to better detect silent, undiagnosed type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes Australia CEO Professor Greg Johnson said the HbA1c test, which can measure long-term blood glucose levels, is recommended both for diagnosing and monitoring the management of type 2 diabetes. Until recently the HbA1c test was only used for monitoring diabetes but it is now recommended for diagnosing type 2 diabetes.

“With up to 500,000 Australians having silent, undiagnosed type 2 diabetes, we are calling for the HbA1c test to be incorporated with other blood tests in emergency departments and other times when doctors are ordering a range of blood tests,” Professor Johnson said.

“If there is one check every adult should have it’s the HbA1c check for type 2 diabetes”

“More opportunistic checks for type 2 diabetes in emergency departments and other situations will help ensure the earlier identification of more people with type 2 diabetes, at minimal cost.”

“People can have type 2 diabetes for up to seven years before it is diagnosed. It can be silent with no symptoms - but during this time the type 2 diabetes is doing damage to the body.”

“There is a questionnaire based risk assessment tool - AUSDRISK. People can do this online at home or talk to a health professional. If you have a high score with AUSDRISK, you should talk to your doctor about a HbA1c test.”

The Centre for International Economics’ (CIE) report, *The economic value of pathology: achieving better health and better use of health resources* highlights the potential cost-savings of early detection of type 2 diabetes.

According to the report, early identification and early treatment of type 2 diabetes can save approximately \$5,000 per annum through the prevention of micro- and macrovascular complications.

To raise awareness of the need for increased testing, politicians in Parliament House, Canberra are being invited to have a HbA1c diabetes test today. The event, organised by Pathology Awareness Australia and Diabetes Australia, is hosted by the

Parliamentary Friends of Diabetes group co-chairs Rowan Ramsey MP and Graham Perrett MP.

The Chair of Pathology Awareness Australia John Crothers said the effectiveness of diabetes testing is clear.

“The major take-out from the CIE report is that there is nothing but upside to early detection of diabetes through pathology testing. With early detection, diabetes is at its most treatable as well as being at its most affordable from a health policy perspective,” Mr Crothers said.

“Seventy per cent of medical decisions rely on pathology testing. It is at the front-line of prevention, detection and management of diabetes and most chronic conditions.”

Thirty-three-year-old Jaybee Serrano is one Australian who has experienced first-hand the importance of an opportunistic check of type 2 diabetes. He will be spending his 34th birthday at the Parliament House Canberra event.

In early 2017, Jaybee went to Blacktown Hospital Emergency Department complaining of a sore neck and had a HbA1c test. The results indicated Jaybee had pre-diabetes - high blood glucose levels but not yet type 2 diabetes - a shock for someone so young. After consultation with his GP, Jaybee has not progressed to type 2 diabetes and now acts as a diabetes educator at Blacktown Mt Druitt Hospital where HbA1c checks are now routine in the Emergency Department.

The full report can be viewed at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bq8q00jclt033oj/AABMEqxnizlAOETija-1-QEYa?dl=0>

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Prof Greg Johnson, Mr John Crothers and Jaybee Serrano are available for interview.

Pathology Awareness Australia

Pathology Awareness Australia is a not-for-profit company formed to improve understanding and recognition of Australia's world class pathology services. Pathology Awareness Australia runs Know Pathology Know Healthcare initiative <http://knowpathology.com.au/> to educate Australians on pathology tests improve personal healthcare.