



Australian MPs visit Southport GP to learn about low carb diet for type 2 diabetes

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A delegation of Australian MPs travelled to the UK earlier this month to meet Southport GP and low carb proponent David Unwin as part of an ongoing inquiry into the role of diet in the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes.

The team of four MPs and a scientific officer, all members Western Australia's Education and Health Standing Committee, spent 24 hours at the Southport practice. They viewed presentations and met patients before sitting down to a low carb dinner (chicken liver pate followed by braised beef and celeriac Dauphinoise) with the practice team and a patient expert.

The visit was set up after Unwin submitted evidence to the committee's ongoing inquiry into diet and type 2 diabetes, showing that the low carb approach saves his practice £40 000 (€46 000; \$52 000) on drugs annually—while helping up to 50% of patients get their diabetes into drug free remission.

The committee's chair, Janine Freeman, explained: "We felt it was important to investigate drug free options for the treatment of type 2 diabetes. It was clear that some of the leaders of this approach are in Britain and very much worth visiting."

She added: "The practice's success shows that it is a powerful practical tool that provides hope for people with type 2 diabetes. It's an approach we will be highlighting in our report to parliament."

Unwin, who was awarded NHS Innovator of the Year at the 2016 National NHS Leadership Recognition Awards for published research into a low carb diet as an alternative to drug

therapy in type 2 diabetes, said he thought he was the victim of a practical joke when the Australian team first contacted him about their proposed visit.

But he said that the visit had been a great success. "I was pleased to find the visitors well briefed, pragmatic, and understanding that the real problem is persuading patients that starchy carbs digest down into sugar," he said. "The visit shows a wonderful energy and a genuine wish to help people. They really liked how what we do is scalable, effective, and inexpensive. Drugs will never be the answer to this epidemic."

The Australians also heard how Unwin had worked with the website diabetes.co.uk to develop its Low Carb Program which has 350 000 users.

Later, the Australians visited Roy Taylor, professor of medicine and metabolism at Newcastle University.

Taylor told *The BMJ* that the delegation was "very interested in the understanding of type 2 diabetes as a simple reversible condition of excess fat inside the liver and pancreas of susceptible people." He said that they agreed that given the rate of increase of type 2 diabetes, "this has major implications for the direction of public health policy and potential recommendations for legislation."

Freeman said: "Professor Taylor's findings illustrate the urgent need to recognise the importance of effective dietary responses to type 2 diabetes and to ensure those diagnosed are fully aware of all their options with respect to treatment of the disease."