

# TRANSCRIPT

MON 14 JULY 2025

## Transcript: AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim, 4BC Radio, *Drive with Jason Matthews*, Monday 14 July 2025

### Subject: Weight loss medications

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**JASON MATTHEWS:** Obesity is costing Australia over \$12 billion a year. New weight loss drugs like Mounjaro and Wegovy are showing strong results, but they're not yet on the PBS. And monthly costs can be in the hundreds. The price tag is pushing some people to find cheaper, unregulated alternatives.

Now, I know of a woman, she's not a friend, but I know of a woman who is receiving out the back injections at her beauty salon and is paying up to \$100 for this weight loss injection. She doesn't know what it's called or what's in it, but all she knows is that it comes from the Philippines. Now, this is a woman who's desperate to lose weight and thinks this is the magical cure. She's also a single mum with a young child. And you don't have to be Einstein to work out this is dangerous. If you don't have Type 2 diabetes, you can't get access to Ozempic. I know this as I'm a person with Type 2 diabetes, and I rely on Ozempic. And the weight loss that's come with it has been really nice as well. I've got to admit it. I think I'm down about 16 kgs. But at times, I struggle to get the drug I need to help fight Type 2 diabetes because some people are just buying it or somehow they're getting scripts and they're able to fulfil them. Some operators have been caught making replica versions of Ozempic and Mounjaro with patients ending up hospital after severe side effects. What's going on?

[AMA Queensland President] Dr [Nick] Yim is a fellow of the Royal Australian College of GPs with a strong focus on chronic disease, diabetes and preventative health. He joins us this afternoon. Dr Yim, thanks for your time today.

**DR NICK YIM:** Good afternoon.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** When I heard this story from someone who knows this lady, I was absolutely shocked. To the best of your knowledge, Dr Yim, are we seeing an increase of this sort of stuff happening around South East Queensland?

**DR NICK YIM:** To my knowledge, we are seeing, unfortunately, counterfeit and replica drugs. It was more prevalent during the periods when Ozempic was short, as you alluded to, for people who are trying to access diabetes medication. We know that obesity does lead to chronic health conditions such as diabetes itself, heart disease, osteoarthritis and joint pain. And we do need strategies for our community to lose weight. As you alluded to, access to these medications can be quite challenging given the costs involved.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** What are your thoughts and what would you say to people who are trying to purchase weight loss drugs that they may think are Ozempic or Mounjaro – often purchased online and through unofficial networks? What would you say to those people?

**DR NICK YIM:** Don't do it. We don't know where these medications are coming from. They could be counterfeits; they could be replicas. They can be very dangerous and it can lead to hospitalisations. The

best thing is to have that conversation with your GP. We know that weight loss is not just about having an injection. It incorporates diet, exercise, potentially seeing a psychologist. There are many things involved with weight loss. Using and resorting to counterfeit medications bought online, it is just flirting with risk.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** I know before I went on Ozempic, I had to go through about three months of trialling some different medications from my GP. Then she finally said, 'okay, you should go on this', and it was almost like it was a last resort. I'm going to be honest, it's changed my life. It's absolutely helped me with weight loss, and it's brought my blood sugar levels down. So, for me, it works perfectly. Some patients think compounded means it's just a cheaper version of the real thing. But based on what we know, how safe are these replica or compounded GLP-1 drugs?

**DR NICK YIM:** We just don't know. They do not go through the same testing as the big companies. Medications that go through the TGA, they have to go through rigorous testing. They go through retesting. There's obviously online reporting if side effects do occur. Anything that we do get from the internet, online, from backyard shops, we just don't know what is actually going into those products. Recently, we also had people testing some of those Ozempic [alternatives] that are bought online at pill testing centres, and it's not what it says is.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** What would you find in stuff that's been tested?

**DR NICK YIM:** We know that many of those agents may not actually be effective. You could be just throwing money away, and could potentially be having products that are unsafe for consumption or injection. That can lead to unfortunate side effects, and also harm that leads to hospitalisations.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** Do you think listing medications like Mounjaro and Wegovy on the PBS could help reduce the use of black market or unsafe alternatives? I can't believe that you can go into a salon and pay up to \$100 and be injected with something that you don't even know what it is?

**DR NICK YIM:** Unfortunately, we do know that cost is a barrier. The PBS does assist individuals accessing this medication. I am sure that the federal government is looking at the health economics side of things with regard to these weight loss medications.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** Finally, what would you say to someone who's considering trying one of these weight loss injections they found online through a friend rather than going to their GP? What is the most critical piece of advice you could give them?

**DR NICK YIM:** You are rolling the dice. We don't know what is in them and you might end up in hospital if you end up using these medications [purchases] offline or from the back of shops.

**JASON MATTHEWS:** Dr Nick Yim, GP and health advocate based in Hervey Bay. Thanks for your time today on 4BC Drive.

**DR NICK YIM:** Thank you very much.

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