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**Transcript:** AMA President Professor Brian Owler, The Today Show, 16 March 2016

**Subject:** Responsible use of antibiotics

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**LISA WILKINSON:** Well, some surprising news for parents this morning on how to treat your sick children. Doctors say kids should not be given antibiotics for ear infections and warn parents to stop using paracetamol or ibuprofen to bring down a child's fever. Australian Medical Association President Professor Brian Owler is here to explain for us. Good morning to you, Professor.

**BRIAN OWLER:** Morning Lisa.

**LISA WILKINSON:** Now, many parents will be surprised by this advice. Can you take us through it.

**BRIAN OWLER:** Yeah. There are about 61 recommendations that have come out of the colleges and associations which look at a whole range of things. But what has caught people's attention is some of the recommendations around antibiotics use for ear infections and also paracetamol or anti-inflammatories for fever. Now, what the recommendations say is don't- they don't say don't treat it. What they say is, in the case of an ear infection, if there is a chance of review in 24 to 48 hours and the ear looks red, just come back and have a review rather than going straight to antibiotics, so that we try and reduce this over-prescribing of antibiotics. In the case of fever, if it is just a fever and the child is not uncomfortable you can wait. But clearly, if the child is uncomfortable or in distress, you need to treat that fever for sure.

**LISA WILKINSON:** Tell us how big a problem is the over-prescribing of prescription medications for kids?

**BRIAN OWLER:** Well, it is an issue right across the board, not just for children, but for adults. Part of the problem here is not just to educate doctors in terms of when antibiotic prescribing is or isn't called for, it is also to educate parents and patients themselves so that we don't prescribe too many antibiotics, because we know if we do that we are likely to see more resistant infections. That's going to mean that people's infections are going to be much harder to treat in the future.

**LISA WILKINSON:** So, what is your advice to parents in particular, with kids and young kids, when the kids do show symptoms of things like ear infections, because they can be very painful. What should they use instead?

**BRIAN OWLER:** Yes, absolutely. So, antibiotics don't treat pain. If the ear is painful then definitely treat it with paracetamol or anti-inflammatory. Go and see your GP and have that discussion with them. They might not want to prescribe antibiotics straight away, particularly when they can do a review in 24 and 48 hours, so follow that advice. And, if your child is unwell and has a fever, if it is just a small fever and the child is well, no need to rush into the use of medication. Clearly, if they become unwell, definitely use paracetamol or anti-inflammatory. But obviously, in any of these cases, if you are concerned, go and see your GP, or particularly in cases with high fever, you might want to see the Emergency Department, depending on the severity.

**LISA WILKINSON:** Okay Professor Brian Owler. Always good to get your insight on the show. Thanks for joining us this morning.

**BRIAN OWLER:** Thanks Lisa.

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