Next Friday, October 16, is National Anaesthesia Day – a promotion by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) that marks the anniversary of the day in 1846 when ether anaesthetic was first demonstrated publicly in Boston. With the dramatic increase in obesity in both adults and children, the theme for this year’s National Anaesthesia Day is that obesity complicates anaesthesia.

Some 30 per cent of all New Zealand adults now have a BMI of 30 or more (for Maori adults, the rate is 48 per cent and for Pacific Island adults, it is 68 per cent); 11 per cent of children aged 2-14 are obese.

The aim of this year’s National Anaesthesia Day is to raise public awareness that this level of obesity in the population has serious implications for health care, and it increases the risks when having an anaesthetic. ANZCA is encouraging overweight patients to talk to their medical team, including their anaesthetist, about the risks and what they can do to help reduce those risks.

Hospitals around the country have been sent posters and patient information for use in outpatient clinics and public displays. Some of the activities planned for Friday October 16 include:

- Auckland City Hospital – an extensive day-long presentation in the main atrium foyer with patient information presented in hard copy and electronically on a four-metre screen, a simulation display with key messages about the role of the anaesthetist, and a historical display.
- Middlemore Hospital – a main entrance display plus information stations, as well as information at the Manukau Super Clinic, with wide-ranging information promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- Gisborne Hospital – an information stand in the foyer with information about obesity and anaesthesia, diabetes, nutrition and healthy living, plus a display of anaesthetic equipment.
- Whanganui Hospital – an information station at the hospital entrance.
- Palmerston North Hospital – a display and interactive station in the atrium foyer that will include an anaesthetic machine and will offer monitoring, taking of blood pressure, etc.
- Hutt Hospital – information in outpatient clinics and an interactive foyer display with a regular size mannequin and a larger size mannequin with the public able to “bag
and mask” the mannequins to see how it is more difficult to do this on the heavier one.

- Wellington Hospital – a display in the hospital atrium highlighting how obesity increases risk in anaesthesia.
- Dunedin Hospital – a display in the hospital foyer noon-4pm with information in hard copy and run through the foyer screens, plus equipment for checking blood pressures and possibly for calculating BMI levels.

ANZCA will be issuing media releases next week for use on Friday October 16 about how obesity complicates anaesthesia and how it can increase the anaesthesia time for women having a caesarean.

- For more information or to request interviews, please contact ANZCA NZ Communications Manager Susan Ewart on +64 4 499 1213 or +64 274 152 815 or sewart@anzca.org.nz. Follow us on Twitter @ANZCA.