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Future vision of AI in our health

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Intelligent machines to support doctors Future vision of AI in our health

CLARE PEDDIE SCIENCE REPORTER

ADELAIDE is a “hot spot” of research in artificial intelligence and machine learning that is transforming health care, says a visiting medical doctor from Google.

Opening the conference of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners at the Adelaide Convention Centre, Dr Martin Seneviratne urged doctors to embrace the tools of artificial intelligence.

“I know there’s a lot of fear in medicine about AI, because there is this throwaway line that AI is going to replace doctors or it’s going to change the work significantly,” he said.

“I think we should reframe that to consider AI as more of a tool to be used and harnessed, rather than something to be really afraid of.”

Dr Seneviratne says that while an increasing number of studies have shown, “in narrow use cases”, that an algorithm can be better than a human at



looking at an image and trying to interpret that image, to go from that to replacing a doctor would ignore all the other things doctors do. But it’s fair to say doctors who use AI will replace those who don’t, Dr Seneviratne says, adding these personal views did not represent those of his London employer.

In Adelaide, the Australian Institute for Machine Learning “has a number of researchers working in health care, actually leading their fields, doing some really impressive stuff”, he says. Director of the Institute at the University of Adelaide, Professor Anton Van Den Hengel, pictured, says AIML is “flat out doing amazing things” with 130 people producing high-quality publications in a very competitive field.

“We’re doing quite well in competing against groups like

Google,” he said. Among the success stories is LBT Innovations, an Adelaide company with an “entirely new class of medical device” now being sold in the US.

Prof Van Den Hengel says the device enables all sorts of sophisticated AI to be applied to data captured elsewhere, to help the pathologist make the best decision and deliver better patient outcomes.

Other successful projects have included interpreting chest X-rays, retinal images and mammograms.

“I really don’t think any of this is replacing doctors, it will only help them make better decisions and help them spend more time focusing on what they are really good at,” Prof Van Den Hengel said. “That is interacting with patients and figuring out patient priorities and how else they can help.”

Adelaide is also the birthplace of medical software company Alcidion, which signed a \$12 million contract with Queensland Health last year.