

Coeliac Association Malta

Carole Pace Balzan

Chairperson, Coeliac Association Malta

Coeliac Association Malta is a voluntary organisation for people with Coeliac Disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis. It is a non-profitable support group founded in 1989 by coeliacs themselves in order to promote the welfare of coeliacs in Malta. Membership is open to those persons who have been medically diagnosed with coeliac Condition or Dermatitis Herpetiformis.

The Association offers help, support and advice, and provides useful information about the Condition and the gluten-free diet to newly diagnosed coeliacs. This makes it easier for the coeliac to overcome the initial shock of having to change eating habits and to adapt to a new lifestyle. The Association also offers on-going support and advice to members and their families and provides dietary guidelines, thus improving the quality of life for the coeliac.

Get-togethers are held regularly to give members the opportunity to meet and also to discuss any problems they might have. For these activities members are encouraged to bake

gluten-free products which are shared over coffee. This is also an occasion to exchange recipes. Speakers are sometimes invited to give talks to members on various issues including medical, dietetic and nutritional concerns. Occasionally, bread-making demonstrations are held and social functions for members and their families are organised.

The Coeliac Association of Malta is a member of The Association of European Coeliac Societies (AOECS) and has contacts with Coeliac Societies worldwide. Important information and research material regarding Coeliac Disease and the gluten-free diet, received from Coeliac Societies in other

countries, is from time to time distributed to members of the Association, as well as to the Medical Profession. Every year two delegates from the Coeliac Association of Malta attend the annual AO ECS conference, thus acquiring important information on recent developments. This yearly event is also an excellent opportunity to meet delegates from other countries and discuss matters of common concern.

Yearly contacts with local manufacturers are kept in order to investigate the presence of gluten in their products. A list of locally manufactured products certified to be gluten-free is then issued and distributed to all members.

One aspect where it is difficult for the Association to advise members concerns medicines. Some medicines may contain hidden sources of gluten and it is proving to be rather difficult for the Coeliac patient to know whether a specific medicine contains gluten. It

The members of the Committee for the year 2000/2001 are:

Carole Pace Balzan	Chairperson
Connie Debattista	Secretary
MaryRose Caruana	Treasurer, PRO & Overseas Contact Person
Helen Gatt	Activities Co-ordinator
Marion Tanti	Member

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would therefore be of great help if the pharmacist could advise coeliac patients when dispensing medicines.

The Association moreover endeavours to create a greater awareness about Coeliac Disease both with the general public as well as amongst medical and health care professionals.

Over the years the number of diagnosed coeliacs has been increasing, such that the incidence in Malta is now

estimated to be 1 in 1000. The prevalence of diagnosed coeliacs in other countries varies considerably, however it is now anticipated that true figures may in actual fact be much higher in every country, with many patients remaining undiagnosed.

The number of members of the Association at present is 200. This number would be much higher if all past members would renew their membership annually. ★

PHARMA SCAN

The Malta College of Pharmacy Practice, in cooperation with TheSYNAPSE, is pleased to announce the launching of the Pharma Scan, a new internet-based service where abstracts of the latest advances in pharmacology, pharmaceutical care and pharmaceutical sciences published in leading peer-reviewed journals such as The Lancet, The New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, Pharmaceutical Journal and many others are available to members of the TheSYNAPSE.

The service also highlights presentations from the latest scientific meetings and important press releases by pharmaceutical companies and pharmaceutical regulatory agencies on both sides of the Atlantic. The abstracts are also linked to the full-text versions of the articles where these are freely available on the internet. Membership to TheSYNAPSE is free and is open to all health and medicine professionals and students.

Membership application forms are available online at <http://www.thesynapse.net/infodesk/membershipform.asp>



The Malta College of Pharmacy Practice is proud to announce the launching of its website at

<http://www.geocities.com/mcpharmp/>

The website features 'The ScanneRx', a periodical scan of the leading peer-reviewed on-line journals, as on-line version of the 'Chronic*ill', the College's annual review journal, up-to-date information regarding the College's continuing education program and other features of interest to pharmacists.

For further information, we invite you to visit our site, or to contact us by email at: mcpharmp@yahoo.com