

Diversity in practice

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Following years of hard work we are pleased to announce that The Malta College of Pharmacy Practice has been included in the Fourth Schedule of the Health Care Profession Act as a professional organisation representing the Pharmacy Profession.

While the College fulfilled all the criteria necessary for inclusion from its inception, accomplishing the deed, proved to be somewhat of an arduous task. Nevertheless, we are very pleased with the outcome and look forward to continuing our service to the profession.

This edition of the Journal illustrates the growth and diversity of the profession in Malta as a reflection of the international scene and the transitions in our country. Through the Journal, the Malta College of Pharmacy Practice aims to support the profession in all its facets and to encourage good communication between practitioners, scientists, regulators and other healthcare professionals with the ultimate aim of improving patient care.

One such transition is Malta's accession to the EU. This event brought with it significant upheaval within the pharmaceutical sector as documented in the paper entitled 'The impact of EU legislation on medicines in Malta'. Due to EU legislation Malta has faced significant challenges relating to availability of medicines which possibly had an impact on rational drug use. On a more positive note, we read that Malta will benefit from a Twinning project with the Netherlands, through which the Registrar of the Pharmacy Council together with registrars' of other regulating bodies, as well as council members, will benefit from intensive training on the relevant EU Directives related to the respective professions. The discussion during the

Front photo: Allegory 'Arzeney' tile, painted and glazed earthenware (circa 1910), The German Museum of Pharmacy, Heidelberg Castle

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recent launch of this project brought to light a number of issues that require further clarification, highlighting the importance of the proposed training.

The management of diabetes using insulin is a highly topical issue. This paper provides an update based on current evidence thus supporting rational use of drugs. Additionally practical information with regards to the delivery and administration of insulin is also provided. It is essential for health care professionals to be well versed in the latter aspects and address them during patient interventions. Successful management is highly dependent not only on drug action but also on delivery and administration.

The paper comparing long-acting beta₂-adrenoreceptor agonists aims to dispel any misconceptions about these commonly used medicines in the management of asthma and COPD. While both formoterol and salmeterol fall within the same classification there are a number of distinct pharmacological differences between the two which have a significant impact on management and patient outcomes. Healthcare professionals dealing with NHS medicines should find this paper of particular interest due to the recent availability of formoterol instead of salmeterol on the local NHS.

Probiotics appear to be generating

significant interest in the medical literature with a number of claims being made. The author identifies these and provides a clear picture regarding evidence, or the lack of it, relating to these claims.

Various countries have evolved and adopted different models of prescribing, pharmacist prescribing being one of them. The paper on pharmacist prescribing reviews the different models of pharmacist prescribing in the USA, UK and other countries. In Malta we still pertain to the traditional prescribing model, which, nevertheless, necessitates attention. The College fully endorses Legal Notice (L.N.) 292 of 2006, Medicines Act, Prescription and Dispensing Requirements Rules, 2006 as illustrated in a previous editorial of this Journal. We are further offering our support to DG Public Health Regulation by publishing the Checklist for prescribing and dispensing, based on the above Legal Notice, which has recently been circulated to healthcare professionals. We strongly urge health care professionals to abide by this LN in the interest of patient safety.

In our quest to enhance communication between the different sectors of the pharmaceutical profession, we have invited a paper from PRIMA, the Pharmaceutical Research and Development Industry Malta Association. This organisation is

a member of The European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) which represents the research-based pharmaceutical industry operating in Europe. We would like to take this opportunity to encourage further submissions from all sectors of the pharmaceutical industry.

The importance of having a strong and well structured primary care system is addressed in the paper entitled Primary Care: QuoVadis? It also stresses the need to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to patient care. The authors have taken the opportunity to introduce The Mediterranean Institute of Primary Care (MIPC) which is a newly formed non-governmental organization aimed at supporting research and training within the domain of primary care in the Mediterranean region.

On a final note we would like to congratulate the Pharmacy Council on the publication of the revised Code of Ethics of the Pharmaceutical Profession. The updated Code reflects the current trends in practice; it especially highlights the profession's shift from a product to a patient-oriented one. We have included The Code in the Journal primarily to support the Council's work and to further encourage pharmacists to read and practice by the code.