

A LIFE DEDICATED TO PHARMACY

THE SYNAPSE MEETS **MARY ANN SANT FOURNIER** PRESENTLY PRESIDENT OF THE MALTA CHAMBER OF PHARMACISTS, AND VISITING SENIOR LECTURER AT THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE & SURGERY, UOM.

“ I was born in a family where my late father, Ferdinand Felice, was a pharmacist and scientist. We experienced an atmosphere imbued with the presence of science, culture, a love of knowledge and ethical practice. This was also a path my late mother Olga, encouraged us to follow on, being very intelligent and well-read herself. My older brothers are a molecular geneticist and a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist and my younger brother is an architect.

My late husband, Charles, was always very proud and supportive of my work in the Chamber and our daughter Vera (of whose two daughters, I am a doting grandmother) today still is.

As a child I remember wanting to become a doctor, but later on explored the option of becoming a pharmacist, also inspired by my father's work in his pharmacy in Sliema. I could sense even then, that at the basis of it all there is a vocation. I have always been also fascinated by the discovery, design and development of drugs, which is a subject I have

studied, developed and continue to teach to Pharmacy undergraduates.

I was one of the B Pharm class of '73. Eventually I became the 1st pharmacist to take an MPhil in Pharmacy (Biochemical Pharmacology) in the UOM in 1977. More recently, I have taken the opportunity to read a PhD in the pharmacogenomics of treatment with oral hypoglycaemic agents in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus at the Laboratory of Medical Genetics, UOM. My first employment within the Pharmacy profession, apart from practising in the family pharmacy, was in pharmaceutical marketing with a British company and subsequently with American and Danish Pharma companies.

The Chamber of Pharmacists is one of the oldest professional associations, if not the oldest of its kind in Malta. It was established in 1900 making it 115 years old this year. It was originally set up by a group of community pharmacists. Today our work touches several other facets of the profession.

I have been involved for many years, first on the editorial board of the Chamber's then printed journal 'The Pharmacist', then as honorary Treasurer and afterwards being elected president in 1987. I still believe that our work is incredibly valid, otherwise I would not be so involved together with my team of Council members. Through the years, I have seen a constant presence of dedicated people who do their best to uphold their profession. We are an association and a union, we have a very strong team of Council members and are helped from time to time by other colleagues, for example, on working committees.

I am humbled by the show of continuing support, trust and respect demonstrated by pharmacists in the outgoing council, at the AGM and elections, last December. I must stress that our present Council is a very strong and committed team with valuable members whose participation is extremely important. Any member of the Chamber can get elected to the Council if he/she gets enough votes and is a Council member in his/her own personal capacity. Its work is uniquely to uphold the profession and ensure best practice. We work towards unity, not division.

The Chamber being a voluntary organization, there could be times when outreach is not always effective in a 360 degree manner though our mission is to reach all sectors of the profession. Some issues take time to resolve, others are long-standing and require much lobbying. It is not possible to reach everybody simultaneously. Then again, people must

Mary Ann with her daughter Vera, interior designer





Mary Ann (second from right) representing the Chamber in the delegation of the National Council, CMTU to the new Speaker of the House of Representative at the Palace, Valletta

realise that we have a limited structure with very limited funds, unlike similar organisations abroad which have higher financial income and support. Nonetheless, with goodwill and hard work, since 1987 our efforts have contributed effectively to the development of Pharmacy legislation including the Medicines Act, Pharmacy education, and better pharmacist representation on the Pharmacy Council. In the early '90s we worked with Pharmaceutical European groups well ahead of Malta's accession to the EU. The Chamber negotiated with Government and

Mary Ann (centre, back) with pharmacy students from MPSA and Council member Mary Anne Ciappara, at the Science in The City 2014



I READ THE SYNAPSE BECAUSE...

“IT IS INTERESTING, ON THE DOT, COVERS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. I ESPECIALLY ENJOY THE VERY ECLECTIC EDITORIALS. IT IS ONE WAY OF KEEPING ABREAST WITH DEVELOPMENTS, WITH SOME ARTICLES BEING MORE INTERESTING THAN OTHERS. IT IS POSITIVE TO SEE THAT IT SUPPORTS THE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS IN SO MANY WAYS, EVEN VIA THE ONLINE VERSION & THE REGULAR EMAIL SHOTS SENT OUT.”

saw the implementation of the first classification and career development agreement for pharmacists in Government service. We have worked hard on the implementation of the landmark national POYC system. Thanks to our work towards an effective POYC system, we have seen an increase in human resources in community pharmacies and new opportunities at the POYC department. More recently too, we are working with other stakeholders on the implementation of the Falsified Medicines EU directive and on the lessening of bureaucracy and simplification of regulation which would affect pharmacists in industry, responsible and community pharmacists.”