
ABSTRACT:

Dementia is not a single disease or condition but a syndrome of multiple different aetiologies. It is usually used as an ‘umbrella’ term (Moore, 2009) for more than 200 different conditions and disorders characterized by a progressive deterioration in cognitive function, some of which are considerably rare. The following review will critically discuss the literature in relation to the development of the principles of person-centred care in dementia. Eventually, studies related to the application of these principles in formal care settings will be critically appraised.
ABSTRACT:

Over the past two decades, the sentinel lymph node biopsy (SLNB) based on sentinel node (SN) being the first lymph node that harbours metastases, revolutionized breast cancer management. SLNB presents much less morbidity when compared to radical axillary lymph node dissection (ALND) where all nodes are dissected irrespective of their metastatic involvement. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of SLNB by investigating whether the histological characteristics of the SNs identified using scintigraphy are predictive of the histological characteristics of the ALN basin. Methods: Fifty-five female breast cancer patients underwent lymphoscintigraphy and SLNB followed by ALND. The histological status of the SNs was correlated to the histological status of the ALNs to determine whether the SN accurately stages the ALNs in breast cancer. Results: During surgery, SNs were successfully isolated in 52 out of 55 cases (94.5%) (range, 0 to 9). No SNs were identified in 3 cases (5.5%). Results demonstrate a significant association (p = 0.05) between the metastatic status of SNs and the corresponding ALNs in 42 out of 52 patients (80.8%), but with a high false-negative rate (FNR) of 37.5%. Conclusion: The findings of this study show that the sentinel node concept provides the benefits of SLNB in the majority of instances. However, further work is required in reducing the FNR. Once the effectiveness of SLNB as a staging technique is locally established, the need of ALND in SN-negative patients would be limited, thus improving the quality of life of Maltese breast cancer patients.


Abstract: Limited word production may be the first indicator of impaired language development. The unavailability of normative data and standardised assessments for young Maltese children hinders the identification of early language delays. This study aimed to document Maltese children’s expressive vocabulary growth and accompanying range of variation, to assist identification of children at risk for language impairment. The expressive vocabularies of 44 typically-developing children aged 12-30 months were measured through caregiver report. Mean scores at each age point were characterised by substantial individual variation. Gender was not related to mean growth in vocabulary production. Minimum scores were compared to clinical thresholds for English-speaking children. Results emphasised the assessment- and language-specific nature of identification criteria. Nevertheless, established thresholds may be referred to when normative data for particular languages/language pairs are limited. In such contexts, the consideration of other risk markers gains importance in supplementing findings on lexical expression.
Presentation at the 8th International Conference on Child & Adolescent Psychopathology (July 2013), University of Roehampton, London, by Dr Michael Galea, Mental Health Nursing

Does child maltreatment mediate family environment and psychological wellbeing?

In this cross-sectional and correlational study, we tried to clarify if childhood maltreatment mediates the established relationship between family environment and psychosocial wellbeing, in a sample of Maltese university students. Our analysis suggested partial mediation only. Moreover, results indicated that abusive families are less loving, socially integrated, organized, and more conflicted. Family environment contributed positively, albeit limited, to cognitive wellbeing after controlling for child abuse history. In particular, cohesion added unique variance to subjective wellbeing after controlling for past trauma. This study replicates classic research on the important role that family environment plays in children’s holistic development, in a relatively new culture.

Mr Martin Ward, Mental Health Nursing – Guest Speaker

- In June Mr Martin Ward was the guest international speaker at the Jubilee Congress in Utrecht, celebrating 15 years of advanced practice psychiatric nursing courses in the Netherlands. His presentation gave an over view of advanced practice throughout Europe and contrasted this with examples from North America and Australasia. He then focused on the roles and responsibilities associated with advanced practice, considering how such practitioners work within multi-disciplinary teams, where they take lead initiatives and how their extended roles and skills can best be used, especially within community based services. He concluded with the leadership component of their work and highlighted the need for such individuals to be not just active clinically and academically, but also politically. All the remaining speakers at the event were from the Netherlands and they covered topics which showed the breadth and depth of their work and influence within the Netherlands health care setting. The day was chaired by a nurse who had been a member of the Dutch Parliament and in the afternoon a round table panel discussion included key politicians, service directors and national figures. The day was crowned by the news from the Dutch Parliament that a bill had been passed that morning allowing advanced practice psychiatric nurses holding a Masters degree to take responsibility for admitting patients into care, previously only the remit of Psychiatrists. In the past two years this group of nurses have also managed to change the law allowing them to prescribe medications. Their lobbying skills are exemplary and show just what can be done politically if professionals set their mind to it and prepare well.

- In July Mr Martin Ward was the guest of the Canadian Psychiatric Nurses Association in Edmonton. He co-hosted a day seminar with Professor Shirley Smoyak (Rutgers University - New Jersey USA) for 100 psychiatric nurses as part of the Alberta psychiatric development group. The day was divided into several sections, addressing the roles and function of senior clinicians, leadership issues, a clinical surgery session and the role of nurses in politics. The day culminated in Martin interviewing Prof. Smoyak about her work in psychiatry over the last 50 years, her relationship with her
friend and colleague, the late Professor Hilda Peplau, regarded by many as the founder of modern-day psychiatric nursing and trying to establish if there was anything to learn from looking at the discipline's historical figures for a younger generation of nurses. The conclusions were interesting in that they showed that nurses in the 50's-70's faced challenges markedly different from those of their modern-day counterparts. Most of these nurses had to trail blaze to get things done, were inventing new roles and services and had little in the way of role models to emulate. By contrast today's nurses had decades of development work to their credit, had established credibility and a high profile within multi-disciplinary teams and psychiatry itself was no longer the sole voice of mental health care. The Association have since reported a very positive response to the day, with participants feeling inspired by their involvement.

In the following two days after the seminar Martin and Shirley visited a broad cross section of mental health services, met with staff of all disciplines and held surgeries on both managerial and clinical issues. The Association have suggested a repeat, or Part II, of the seminar in 2014.

The pictures show Prof Smoyak and Martin on stage during their interview and posing for photographs during coffee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr Donia Baldacchino promoted to Associate Professor

Dr Donia Baldacchino B.Sc. (Hons.)(Nurs.Stud.), M.Sc.(Lond.),Ph.D.(Hull),Cert.Ed.(Lond.), R.G.N, Department of Nursing, has been promoted to the post of Associate Professor on the 17th July 2013 at the University of Malta.

Awarded the posts of a Visiting Fellow with the University of South Wales since 2006 and Adjunct Faculty member with Johns Hopkins University since 2011, she coordinated the MSc Nursing and Midwifery course between 2004 and 2011. Donia is supervising PhD students, two registered with the University of South Wales and two registered with the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta. Since completion of the PhD study at the University of Hull UK, Donia published 24 research papers in peer reviewed international nursing journals and three books on the spiritual dimension in illness and care. The publications incorporate local
and comparative studies on samples of clients and nursing students between Malta and other countries such as, Wales, Australia and Norway. Various cross sectional, longitudinal and comparative research studies are being conducted on nursing students and clients on dialysis between Malta and various other countries. Donia’s research instrument ‘Spiritual Coping Strategies Scale’ was translated into Italian, Spanish and Persian languages and tested psychometrically with positive reliability and validity results.

On international level, Donia delivered keynote speeches and papers in various international conferences; currently a member of the Scientific Committee of the 5th NETNEP-2014 international nursing education conference to be held in June 2014 in the Netherlands; and also Chairperson of the Organising Conference of the European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health to be held in Malta in May 2014.

The post of Associate Professor gives credibility to Donia’s work on the importance of spirituality in illness, care and education. In an attempt to strengthen community outreach and holistic care, Donia is coordinating the second course on Parish Nursing run by the local Pastoral Formation Institute.

Congratulations Donia!

Ms Nathalie Buhagiar, visiting lecturer within the Department of Occupational Therapy has received a Fulbright visiting scholar award.

She will be hosted by the Division of occupational science and occupational therapy, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill over the summer months. Her project entitled “Occupational therapy, special needs and inclusion: serving children in the home, school and community” will enable Nathalie to participate in various programmes, research and initiatives related to this area of practice. This includes shadowing Lauren Holahan consultant to North Carolina Schools, the only occupational therapy consultant in the US. She will also participate in on-going research projects by Dr Ruth Humphry looking at the way occupational therapists practice in schools, and another led by Dr Brian Boyd entitled Advancing communication and play: an intervention for pre-schoolers with autism as well as liaising with PhD students engaged in various other projects.

Nathalie will visit various facilities related to inclusive education such as mainstream primary schools, with a special interest in Jesuit Schools, being herself an inclusion coordinator at St Aloysius College, a primary Jesuit school. She will have the opportunity to evaluate various therapy services, hospital and
community based clinics. She will also attend a school speciality conference in Minneapolis organised by AOTA, the American occupational therapy association.

Nathalie hopes to establish links with university counterparts that will be beneficial for the Department of occupational therapy at the University of Malta, as well as gain insights on improving practices in occupational therapy and inclusive educational practices in Malta. She hopes to share any insights gained with colleagues in the fields of occupational therapy, disability and inclusive education working in both public and private sectors. She will be accompanied by her husband and three children.

Well done Nathalie!

**Freshers` Week at FHS Foyer**

As in previous year, the MHSA will be organising a freshers week at the FHS Foyer between Monday 30 September and Friday 4 October.

This yearly activity is focused on new students joining the Faculty during the academic year 2013/2014.