INTRODUCTION
Point-of-care testing in a community pharmacy scenario empowers pharmacists to manage and monitor patients with chronic disease resulting in a positive effect on the individual patient’s health. According to the WHO (2006) global infobase data, the mean total cholesterol levels for Maltese adults aged 15 years and over was reported to be 5.7 mmol/L for males and 5.9 mmol/L for females.

AIM
To propose and evaluate interventions carried out by a pharmacist in a community pharmacy to monitor lipid profile and educate patients on lifestyle modifications.

SETTING
A community pharmacy in Zabbar, in the south of Malta with a population per pharmacy of 3758.

METHOD
- 41 patients chosen by convenience sampling were monitored for blood lipid parameters (total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL-cholesterol, HDL-cholesterol) during 3 visits over 8 months (time 0, time 4 months, time 8 months). Patients included were those who accepted to participate and to pay 5 Euro for all the tests carried out during the 3 visits.
- Testing was carried out using the Reflotron Plus (Roche Diagnostics) analyser.
- During each visit, the investigator (SC) provided information on lifestyle modifications particularly diet and lifestyle habits.
- Each time a questionnaire was completed by the patients to document medications being taken and lifestyle habits as reported by the patient.
- The study was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.
- Results were analysed using SPSS and the Chi-Square test and the One-Way Anova were carried out.

RESULTS
Patient demographics
41 patients participated in the three visits out of a total of 53 patients who started the study.
- Gender: 26 females, 15 males
- Mean age range: 24-73 years
- Relevant medical history: 14 patients
- Chronic medications: 13 patients of which 7 were using lipid lowering drugs

Parameters | Visit 1 | Visit 2 | Visit 3 |
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triglycerides | 1.77 | 1.64 | 1.58 |
LDL-cholesterol | 2.96 | 2.91 | 3.11 |
HDL-cholesterol | 0.69 | 0.73 | 0.67 |
Total cholesterol | 4.58 | 4.42 | 4.58 |

Table 1: Lipid profile over the 3 visits (n=41)

There was a statistically significant improvement in dietary habits between the 3 visits for the consumption of fruit and vegetables, fatty foods and sugar-containing foods (p <0.05). The number of patients who did not undertake any form of exercise decreased from 14 at visit 1 (initial visit) to 4 at visit 3 (follow-up 2). The number of patients who took up exercise for more than 60 minutes per day increased from 1 patient in visit 1 to 6 patients in visit 2.

CONCLUSION
A limitation of the study was the timeframe which may not have allowed for changes in lipid parameters to be captured. The study demonstrated that community pharmacists in the local scenario can offer a structured service for point-of-care testing of hypercholesterolaemia where patient follow-up is taken up to assess impact of measures suggested. This service could be incorporated within a framework of paid-pharmacist intervention services for the management of patients with chronic disease.

Reference