

Editorial

This issue of the MMJ presents a number of studies pertinent to the practice of Medicine in Malta. Gouder et al determine the prevalence of Interstitial Lung Disease in presenting to Mater Dei Hospital, the main NHS Hospital and University Teaching Hospital where such patients are reviewed. They carry out an in depth analysis of diagnostic tests as well as of the management and follow up of these patients. This paper highlights the need to develop and implement adherence to standardized practice guidelines locally with eventually better concordance to international recommendations and improvements in patient care. In the same setting, Callus et al analyse the hospital management of community acquired pneumonia demonstrate that a significant proportion of admissions can be avoided if patients are properly assessed and stratified using standardized investigative methods, determining severity of the pneumonia in combination with co-morbidity analysis. Once again the implementation of such practices would safeguard hospital bed occupancy for patients truly requiring in patient care. Manche & Grech provide a historical review of early cardiac surgery in the Maltese islands and in a second article, Manche presents an analysis of early and late outcomes after heart transplantation in Malta which represents a low volume transplant centre. Following up on an earlier study reporting increasing mortality from mycobacterial infection in homozygous carriers of a mutation of the interferon gamma receptor (IFNGR1), Anderson and co workers present data that morbidity and mortality is not increased in heterozygous carriers of the same mutation exposed to more virulent pathogens. Savona Ventura looks at changes in contraceptive use in Malta over decades and highlights the increasing secularization that has become evident in more recent years in the utilisation of different contraceptive methods. Delia and co-workers pilot the development and use of a Maltese speech language screening test in a subset of the elderly Maltese subjects. The rationale behind this study is to promote early detection and proper quantification and classification of

speech language pathology in the elderly. An interesting case report highlights the importance of using ultrasonography for the early detection of infections at the site of insertion of peritoneal dialysis catheters enabling early intervention with antibiotics thus enabling continuing use of that catheter. Finally a multidisciplinary approach to the management of a rare instance of Mullerianosis involving the vesico-ureteric junction in a patient with Endometriosis raises awareness of the need for regular urinary tract assessment in patients with endometriosis to avoid chronic hydronephrosis and renal impairment.

This series of original papers and reports provides the Medical Community with data relevant to quality patient centred health care in Malta. They also provide data that can be used by healthcare providers and policy planners on how to utilise resources efficiently and in a cost effective fashion. They demonstrate the need to apply available algorithms and tools to ensure patient safety and improve concordance with internationally established practice norms.

Regretfully the current financial situation is such that distribution of the Journal in hard copy to our readership is not possible. Pending resolution of this issue however, the web-based online archives of the MMJ will continue to provide us with a cost effective means for the dissemination of valuable observations and information regarding issues relevant to medical practice and healthcare provision locally. We, as a medical community, in turn appreciate the dedication of those who take the time and trouble to carry out such studies. Furthermore, in spite of the obstacles that do surface whilst preparing the MMJ for publication, be it in print and/or online, I am grateful to the members of the Editorial Board who have always risen to the different challenges posed, thus ensuring that the Malta Medical Journal continues to fulfil its role as the peer-reviewed journal of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery committed to the dissemination of medical knowledge to the community at large.

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