

Personal Ponderations

It was a dry and sunny September morning when, in 2005, I paid a visit to Dr Wilfred Galea at his Dingli office. I remember that we discussed many topics that inevitably gravitated around my involvement with The Synapse medical magazine. This was followed, a few days later, by a second meeting at a corner bar in St Luke's square to discuss the metamorphosis of the monotone 8-pager, with the primary goal being the dissemination of relevant medical information to the busy healthcare professional.

I thus became the Managing Editor of the magazine. There is no need to explain the evolution of the publication. All of you are witness to its cathartic evolution. Along the years, a diverse set of contributors started being involved including distinguished lawyers, historians, pharmacists, doctors, as well as allied healthcare professionals. We introduced regular interviews with local and foreign trailblazers including the late Prof. Edward Debono, Prof. Dame Claire Gerada - former President of the RCGP, and Boston University's Robert A. Knox Professor Sandro Galea. Other distinguished characters such as Prof. Denis Horgan, who was a policy advisor in the European Parliament, contributed material to the magazine. Also, collaborations with student associations and medical associations were launched. My aim was always to communicate and build bridges. I strongly believe that if we speak and work together, we can naturally achieve our goals together.

If the readers don't mind a personal ponderation, the transmutation of the publication during the past two decades marked specific seminal changes in my life. Of note is the fact that I lost my father to pancreatic adenocarcinoma on the 3rd of July 2021, 2am. My father's disease gradually gutted me for 13 long months. It was living hell, which was made worse by radiotherapy machine breakages and industrial actions. During this period, I also started to discern true friendships, beyond my naïve predisposition.

Returning to the subject, each publication which, until recently was published six times a year, involved exhaustive discussions, planning, and editing. I still remember the bi-monthly nocturnal pre-publication meetings at Dr Galea's office which used to last till 1am, discussing the design and proof reading, over sandwiches and tea.

These two decades, during which I crossed paths with hundreds of healthcare professionals, have indeed been an enriching experience. I mastered the art of discipline and good governance, was taught to speak the truth, admit a mistake when this was made, and responsibly take disciplinary actions if need be, even if I did not like to do so. However, I have never been a demonizer or ruffian. I always strived to build bridges built on trust, believing that if we work together we can achieve our goals together. This was the *raison d'être* at The Synapse which I fiercely assimilated by osmosis.

Why am I writing all this? Because these past few months were particularly challenging for me. In hindsight, this baptism of fire has strengthened me. Period.

I take the opportunity to convey the following three messages to the young ones. Just three.

1. Passionately build your legacy, with time, empathy and resilience as your confidants. Draw energy from positive people. Heed advice from the older generations whom you trust.
2. Have the guts to board a new train and equally, find in your inner self even more courage to step down. Believe in yourself. You are your greater strength.
3. Lead by speaking truth to power, knowing your limitations. This will earn you respect even though this is rarely shown to you.

The going is tough, very tough, but the future is bright. *'Justify the Ways of God to Men'* ... reverberating words penned by John Milton in 1674, and still relevant to me in 2024.

