

The MMSC XI: a postscript

Simon Attard Montalto

The XIth Malta Medical School Conference, organised at the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta on the 4-6th December 2025, has come to pass. Incredibly, despite the challenges faced including but not restricted to often unreasonable bureaucracy, apathy, an almost two-year delay and of course spiralling expenses, the Conference was a success. The Malta Mediterranean Conference Centre (MCC) in Valletta is, undoubtedly, an amazing location and elevates 'the whole' by its inherent grandeur and historical splendour. Staff at the MCC, the Conference caterers, as well as the outside support for audiovisual aids for the Republic Hall, our website host, and other farmed-in miscellanea that a conference of this size necessitates, all 'came good' on the day(s)! Certainly, costings were at a premium, but we were not disappointed for having had to pay for quality.

Prof Simon Attard Montalto
Editor, MMJ

Department of Paediatrics,
The Medical School,
Faculty of Medicine & Surgery,
University of Malta,
Msida, Malta

COVER PICTURE

'The Neolithic'

Pierre mallia has been painting on canvas for the last fifteen years, most of which go for charity and the rest in a personal collection.

He follows in the steps of his father and is inspired by the towers and bastions of Malta but also by the Neolithic sites, views of sunsets on the sea and others. His method is an abstraction of a scene which he adapts from pictures or personal photos.

He is to host an exhibition for Puttinu cares later this year.

The conference stuck to its 'green' mantra and did away with most paper paraphernalia and, as with most modern conferences, presented all posters in electronic format. Despite the slow start with submissions – just over 100 with only 2 months to go – these took off after 2 extended deadlines for submissions to reach almost 600 (a record for any MMSC). The scientific Committee, ably led by Professor Chris Scerri, had to work overtime to prepare an exciting programme in the brief time left after the deadline for abstracts closed. But deliver they did, and the Organising committee was forced to activate the option with the MMC to use all six breakout rooms to accommodate the chosen 350+ oral presentations. These were varied and of a high scientific level, anchored by five superb plenary lectures. Speakers hailed from several countries in Europe and a few from the United States and included eminent experts from august institutes such as The Karolinska Institute in Sweden, MD Anderson in the US, Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, and Gemelli Hospital in Rome, amongst others.

A conference without sufficient registrants is 'empty' regardless of the quality of the scientific content: the MMSC XI did not disappoint, and at the final count, 827 registrants exceeded the numbers who attended all previous MMSC conferences. Although the vast majority of departments and subspecialties supported the conference with

abstract submissions and registrations, there were a few still conspicuous by their absence. This was a shame and is a lacuna that needs to be plugged next time around.

Feedback from guest and invited speakers, participants, exhibitors, and sponsors was uniformly or overwhelmingly positive. The very few dissenters were a minority of habitual moaners or those who were not offered an additional discount to their already heavily discounted registration fee! Amazingly, such individuals still exist! Many participants and exhibitors who had attended previous MMSC conferences declared that this surpassed all others. Praise indeed, but this feedback raises the bar still higher for MMSC XII.

I believe we can declare that the MMSC XI has continued to fly the flag of the Malta Medical School, and offered a platform whereby the work and research carried out by Maltese doctors and allied disciplines was show-pieced. To-date, it remains the largest academic event of its kind organised within this University. Its success is owed to numerous persons including members of the Organising and Scientific Committees and, especially, to all the administrative staff from the Medical School who deserve a special salutation. The XIth MMSC has re-set the bar and has re-defined the challenge for the XIIth MMSC to surpass in three years' time.