EDITORIAL

"It-Tabib tal-Familja” is to be issued regularly and contains the news and views of the Malta College of Family Doctors — hence its name — “The Family Doctor” in Maltese.

It is hoped that this newsletter will further improve the importance of lifelong education in our professional career. For the first time in Malta, Continuing Medical Education (CME) programmes are to be organised so as to review, research and update topics of medical importance directly aimed towards family doctors. “It-Tabib tal-Familja” is determined to further seek and improve this academic understanding and position of family doctors in Malta. This newsletter will also give the opportunity for all family doctors to participate actively through write-ups or comments so as to convey academic/ethical ideals, projects and research both locally and to our College’s affiliations overseas.

The creation of this newsletter will surely be helpful so as to provide an overall insight into the College’s work. With the right format and your backing, I hope that this newsletter will grow to be the journal of the Malta College of Family Doctors.

Godfrey Farrugia

M.C.F.D. AUTUMN C.M.E. MEETING

The MCFD is to launch its first CME meeting on September 18th, 19th and 20th (Wednesday to Friday). Purposely for the occasion the Malta College has invited Dr Edwin Martin, the Malta Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners and Dr Fred Demanuele from the University of Toronto and Dr Mark Agius, a general practitioner currently practising in the United Kingdom.

The titles for the sessions are: “Practice premises”, “Record Keeping”, “Why Patients Consult Family Doctors”. These meetings will have a panel of speakers consisting of local and foreign contributors. Their presentations will be followed by an open discussion on the topic of the day.

Attendance at the autumn meeting will be accredited (as stipulated in statute) and all members are urged to attend. Registered medical practitioners who are non-members may attend at a fee of LM6. Medical students and pre-registration medical doctors are invited to attend (admission free). The Autumn CME meeting will be followed by an evaluation and analysis.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Doctor,

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) is a milestone in Maltese Medical History. It has ushered in a new era which will see Family Practice in Malta taking its rightful place among the medical specialities. This development, long overdue, is part of the natural evolutionary process in the medical field. We have no illusions — the road ahead is long and arduous, the hurdles multiple. This formidable challenge can only ensure that what needs to be done will be accomplished. During our brief existence, we have striven hard to establish our College on a firm footing. The international recognition and support forthcoming to date fill us with satisfaction and hope for the future.

We shall be formally launching our programme of activities in September with a comprehensive CME programme designed by family doctors for family doctors. It is hoped that it will serve to upgrade further the standard of Family Practice in Malta, ensuring it will conform to international levels.

A word of thanks goes to His Excellency Dr. V. Tabone MD FRCS, President of Malta, who has accepted to act as Patron of the College in his personal capacity; to Prof. J. Rizzo-Naudi who has given us his wholehearted help; to the Royal College of General Practitioners for its enthusiastic support and in particular Dr. Edwin Martin and Dr. Alistair Donald whose presence amongst us last year served as a catalyst for the launching of the College; to the Canadian College of Family Physicians; to all the Council members, particularly Dr. Ray Busuttil and Dr. Wilfred Galea who along with the undersigned set sail in a sea of scepticism, and to each one of you for responding to our call and rallying onward, encouragingly boosting membership to 93 doctors.

The MCFD has a valuable role to play in Maltese Society. We are confident that in the long term it will prove to be the cornerstone of medical practice in Malta.

Dennis Soler

AN INSIGHT INTO THE COLLEGE COUNCIL’S WORK

Since the general meeting held in May this year, the Council has met on four occasions. The main items discussed included the setting up of a CME programme for members, the establishment of international contacts and the achievement of support and recognition from such contacts, the building of a College resource centre and the finding of premises for the College. On the international scene, the College, although still very much in its infancy, is doing very well. The Royal College of General Practitioners of England has unreservedly recognised our College and has promised aid and support. The Royal College has promised a grant of £5000 to help us build funds and to purchase any necessary resource materials, it has appointed a Malta Fellow to act as College advisor and he will visit Malta at the expense of the Royal College every year for five years, it has given us open access to its resources and promised us complimentary subscription to several educational journals and publications, and pledged its support for the time when our College decides to introduce membership by examination. The Canadian College of Family Physicians has also recognised our College and pledged its support. It has granted us complimentary subscription to its publications and also promised to provide any help in terms of any resources we may need. The ties with these Colleges has put our College in a very good position on the international scene. The College has also joined the European General Practice Research Workshop and has also applied for full membership of WONCA. Although we have access to resources overseas, the Council feels that our College should build up its own resource and reference centre. The emmassing of the relevant journals, books and publications will take time and indeed a lot of money. The aim of the Council is to build a general practice oriented library for use by its members though it does not anticipate that this will materialise in the near future. Should any member require any help, he/she should contact me or the College Librarian (Dr. M. Rizzo-Naudi). Such a library can only be open to members once the College has its own premises. At present, Council is utilising premises in Zebbug made available to it by Dr. G. Farrugia, but larger and more suitable premises are required. Any members with ideas or help in this direction are kindly asked to contact me. Finally, Council has worked on a programme of CME for this autumn. The details will be published elsewhere.

The success of the College depends on the active participation of its members. I appeal to you all to support Council in its endeavours. The road ahead is long and difficult but with a concerted effort we shall get there.

Ray Busuttil
A PROFILE OF MCFD FOUNDER MEMBERS

It became clear at the first general meeting of our College that the formation of the MCFD is indispensable to the academic future of Family Doctors in Malta. All registered medical practitioners in Malta were sent the statute of the college and an application form. Out of the eligible doctors there were eighty applications for membership — a significant response that clearly shows that doctors in Malta are interested in this set-up. The application forms for membership were designed also to answer some of the other questions: do Maltese family doctors think that there is need for an academic organisation in general practice? Do the Maltese family doctor feel that there is a need to upgrade the standard of care by undergoing formal training in family medicine? Would doctors be prepared to attend regular Continuing Medical Education (CME) programmes in family medicine? Is there any interest amongst the Maltese family doctor population in participating in some form of research? Do Maltese family doctors do any CME and if so in what form?

Ages ranged from 28 years to 71 years (one doctor did not specify age in the application form). The age of applicants was heavily weighted towards the younger age groups perhaps because the Malta medical school has produced a large number of graduates in recent years.

It was thought also that there is the need for formal training programme in family medicine as well as a continuing programme of CME. This need was confirmed when the perceived needs of the members were examined. Sixty three (77%) of the applicants would be interested to join a formal programme of training in family medicine and sixty one (75%) would want to attend both a formal and a regular programme of CME. Sixty six applicants (81%) would both like to attend formal training programme, CME and are also interested in taking part in research in general practice.

Of the doctors who would attend for formal CME training, 37 (58%) are in government employment and part time general practice whereas 26 (41%) are in private practice only. Maybe this would remove any doubts, should there be some, as to the perceived needs of family doctors for further training in family medicine in Malta. The same picture holds true for research and the members of the Malta College of Family Doctors. Out of the 66 members of the college who stated that they would be interested in taking part in research in family medicine in Malta 28 (43%) are in private general practice whereas 38 (57%) work in a combination of government and private general practice. Ninety five percent (n=76) of doctors derive their CME at present from journals whereas 73% (n=59) derive their CME from journals and by attending lectures. All those who derived their CME from lectures also consider journals as an essential source of CME.

One can conclude that the founder members of the Malta College of Family doctors come from all the strata of the population of Maltese family doctors. There is a perceived need by the members for both formal and informal CME as well as a desire for participation in research. This is what the College is aiming to achieve.

Wilfred Galea

FIRST SEIZURES

Our College is participating in a Multicentre Study on First Seizures. Members who would like to take part are requested to contact Dr. John Gauci (Tel: 339402) for a questionnaire. You will be asked to fill in one of these whenever you encounter a patient with his/her first seizure (whatever the cause).

CME PROGRAMME

Three major CME meetings are to be held this coming Autumn, Winter and Spring. Conferences of clinical and general interest will be held between these major events. The College has also the intention to hold epidemiological studies/research projects in Family Practice. A system of accreditation is to be announced in the near future. Participation is registered.
ENCOUNTERS

APRIL 1990

Dr. Wilfred Galea attended the Spring meeting of the RCGP. He met Dr. Stuart Carne, President of the Royal College, Dr. Don Rae, President of the World Organisation of Family Doctors, and visiting members of the Canadian College of Family Doctors. Discussion topics included the formation of the Malta College and future developments. (Harrogate, UK)

JULY 1990

Dr. Ray Busuttil visited the University of Toronto where he met Prof. W. Palmer, Head of the Department of Family Medicine and Prof. D. Johnson, Assistant Head. He also had interesting talks with Dr. E. Dunn and Dr. L. Librach regarding coordination of CME programmes and residency training programmes. He also met members of the Canadian College of Family Doctors. (Toronto, Canada)

AUGUST 1990

Dr. Dennis Soler visited Dr. Edwin Martin, Malta Fellow of the RCGP. The discussion centred on our College’s CME programme and the international conference of family doctors to be jointly organised by our College and the Beds and Herts Faculty of the RCGP in late 1991. (Bedford, UK)

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