

# UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE TO BE SET UP. PROPOSALS FOR REFORM IN PRIMARY CARE TO BE PRESENTED TO CABINET PRESS RELEASE

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During a meeting with Prime Minister Dr Eddie Fenech Adami on the 12th February 1999 at the Auberge de Castille, the President of the Malta College of Family Doctors, Dr Denis Soler, announced that the setting-up of a long-overdue University Department of Family Medicine had been included in the Faculty of Medicine & Surgery's Strategic Plan for 1998-2000, and urged that the Cabinet favourably considers a report outlining Proposals for Reform in the Primary Health Care Services prepared by the College with the Department of Primary Health Care and the Medical Association of Malta.

Dr Soler was heading a delegation from the Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD), also consisting of Vice-President Dr Joseph G Pace and Honorary Secretary Dr Mario R Sammut, which paid a courtesy visit to the Prime Minister in the presence of the Minister of Health Dr Louis Deguara, the Minister of Education Dr Louis Galea, and Dr Austin Gatt, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

## *Proposals for Reform in Primary Care*

After Dr Sammut gave an overview of the College's efforts in encouraging, fostering and maintaining the highest possible standards in family medicine in Malta since its foundation in 1989, Dr Soler presented the Prime Minister with a memo outlining the College's "Recommendations for the future development of Primary Care in Malta", together with the MCFD's "Policy Document on Family Medicine in Malta". The College augured that this government would not make the mistake of past governments which failed to acknowledge the intrinsic value of Primary Health Care in the delivery of good quality health care, and that the Prime Minister's Cabinet, in the coming days, will act favourably on a report on the subject prepared over the past weeks by a working group formed of representatives from the Primary Care Department, MAM and the MCFD.

Dr Soler pointed out that international experience consistently shows that those health systems with a comprehensive and strong general practice set-up go hand in hand with relatively low national spending on health care. Moreover, practically all European countries acknowledge Family Practice as a distinct specialty and provide training opportunities for doctors wishing to pursue this discipline

as a career. The Prime Minister was in fact presented with a "Specialist Training Programme in Family Medicine" which the College had prepared in 1997, but which could not be instituted due to a lack of funds, in spite of the endorsement of the Royal College of General Practitioners, together with other international academic organisations.

## *New Department of Family Medicine Proposed*

After repeated College proposals over the years to the University of Malta regarding the dire need of an academic unit for Family Medicine, Dr Denis Soler announced that Prof. Mark Brincat, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, had recently proposed the setting-up of a "long-overdue" new Department of Family Medicine. Such department was envisaged to organise an undergraduate programme, and also concentrate on a long-awaited postgraduate vocational training scheme. Dr Soler had congratulated Prof. Brincat on his bold decision, and accepted his invitation to chair, as College president, an Ad-hoc Advisory Committee on Family Medicine to counsel the Dean regarding the establishment of such Department of Family Medicine.

18th February 1999

*PS: The 'Proposals for Reform in Primary Care' were returned to the working group by the Cabinet with a request for reconsideration due to financial constraints.*