

REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN GENERAL PRACTICE RESEARCH WORKSHOP INTERNATIONAL COURSE IN RESEARCH METHODS IN PRIMARY CARE

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Ever since hearing of the special courses in Research Methods organised by the European General Practice Research Workshop from time to time in different countries in Europe, it has been my dream to organise one in Malta.

The courses are full time five day events, with didactic lectures and practical sessions combined to give a balanced learning experience. The course would be ideal for Maltese doctors, I thought, as we have had little opportunity to learn research methods after the basic outline we get in our undergraduate curriculum.

I managed to convince the EGPRW council to allow me to organise one in Malta. Two attempts, in September and November last year fell through because one lecturer could not make it.

At the EGPRW Crete meeting, I managed to convince Frank Dobbs and Ruth Bridgewater from the United Kingdom, and Igor Svab from Slovenia to deliver this course here.

Frank set out the plan of lectures, and tackled quantitative research methods with Igor's help. Ruth was asked to talk about qualitative research methods. Two lecturers, Melanie Joyner and Kevin Meethan, were asked to deliver a lecture over a two-way audio link to the UK. I organised a group of local doctors to contribute from their areas of expertise. The team included Denis Soler, Ray Busuttil, Sina Bugeja, Hugo Agius Muscat, Julian Mamo, and myself. Anthony Mifsud and Mario R. Sammut helped in the organisation.

It all came together, at last. Twenty-five or so Maltese doctors, one dentist, and three doctors from abroad attended the course. Two doctors came from Hungary, and one from the United Kingdom.

The course was very intensive, comprising seven hours of lectures and practicals a day, for five consecutive days. Extensive use was made of computers and an LCD projector, and lectures were delivered using Powerpoint generated slides. Internet use was demonstrated, as was use of the Microsoft Office applications, and Epi-Info software. A two-way audio link was set up, and two lectures were delivered from the UK using pre-prepared transparencies, and participants could also ask questions and make comments on the presentation to the lecturer abroad.

In the end, we were all satisfied that we had learnt a lot, and had got what we came for. It was a great satisfaction to see this result after all that work. A great big thanks to Frank Dobbs, the team of lecturers mentioned above, our sponsors (the Department of Health, San Michel table water, Thomas De La Rue, Capua Palace Hospital), the European General Practice Research Workshop, the Malta College of Family Doctors, and the Forum Hotel staff for making it all possible.

