

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT ON COLLEGE ACTIVITIES 1998-99

MARIO R. SAMMUT

HONORARY SECRETARY, MCFD

THE COLLEGE COUNCIL:

The College Council met 15 times over the past year since the last AGM on 5th May 1998, with participation of members as follows:

D Soler	15	A P Azzopardi	13	A Mifsud	11
M R Sammut	15	M A Borg	13	J P Gauci	5
P Sciortino	14	J G Pace	12	R Busuttil	2
J K Soler	14	W Galea	11		

- Five of these meetings during February and March 1999 were dedicated specifically to the organisation of the 6th Mediterranean Medical Congress, which the College has applied to hold in Malta in September 2000.
- In reply to a call for nominations dated 1st March 1999 for the posts of President and Members of the College Council 1999-2001, by the closing date of 15th March one nomination for President was received, together with 10 nominations for members. As such, the nominees were declared elected uncontested by the Electoral Commission.

SUB-COMMITTEES & SECRETARIATS:

• Subcommittee on Computerised Medical Records:

In September 1998, Dr J K Soler confirmed that Prof. Henk Lamberts and Dr Inge Okkes from the University of Amsterdam had offered a computerised medical records database - TRANSHIS - in the public domain to the College, with the only condition of data being returned to them for research purposes. Prof. Lamberts and Dr Okkes held a successful seminar of introduction for interested College members the 7 - 8 November 1998 at the Forum Hotel, St Andrew's. In December 1998, Council decided to initial

an agreement with the Transition Project to use Transhis. During March 1999, another meeting was held by the College Council with Prof. Lamberts regarding the adaptation of the programme for Maltese use.

• Research Secretariat:

The **Research Methods** Course planned with the EGPRW for two consecutive weekends in September 1998 had to be postponed to 1999 due to the non-availability of the two external speakers. In December 1998, it was revealed that the course was to be held on 3 - 7 June 1999.

• Subcommittee on Specialist Training:

In November 1998, Dr P Sciortino presented to Council a Memo on Specialist Training prepared by the sub-committee. Council recommended the following *list of priorities* in order of importance:

- (i) The setting up of a Trainers' Group (Dr P Sciortino to organise and define its short-term objectives);
- (ii) A needs assessment re education (perhaps undertaken by such Trainers' Group);
- (iii) Other basic research by others outside the Trainers' Group (where the Group could act as a resource for these other researchers);
- (iv) An orientation programme

to be developed by the Trainers' Group (after the needs assessment);

- (v) A Teacher's Course for the group by Dr John Howard (of the International Committee of the RCGP) starting in October 1999.

CPD MEETINGS:

- The Hospice Movement and the College co-organised a lecture entitled '**Problem Solving in Cancer Pain**' given by Dr Helena Thornley on the 23rd June 1998 at the Hospice's premises.
- The **Autumn CPD Meeting** was held on 14-16 October 1998 under the title of '*The ABC of ENT Disease*', and sponsored by Charles DeGiorgio Co. Ltd. The speakers and topics for each evening were as follows: Dr M E Said, Dr C Borg and Mr E Farrugia, who spoke on Vertigo, Nasal Obstruction and Hearing Loss respectively.
- The **Winter CPD Meeting** was held on 27 - 29 January 1999 and entitled '*Sexually Transmitted Disease in the Community - the role of the Family Doctor*'; Lt. Colonel Dr Philip Carabott, Venerologist, was the speaker. The co-sponsors were Glaxo-Wellcome and Rhone Poulenc-Rorer.
- A GP evening was held in collaboration with the College during the conference "*Ageing - a Challenge for the New Millennium*" at St Vincent de Paule Residence for the Elderly on 3 - 6th February, 1999.
- A session devoted to Family

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Medicine was held during the **4th Maltese Medical School Conference** on Wednesday 10th March 1999. The guest speaker was Prof. Henk Lamberts who spoke on 'General Practice - the key to health care in a new era'; he was followed by Drs D and J K Soler, who spoke on '500 consecutive consultations in general practice' and 'ICPC' respectively.

- The **Spring CPD Meeting** was held on 5 - 7 May 1999, organised in collaboration the Jesuit Fathers' 'Centre for Faith and Justice', and entitled '*Equity in the Allocation of Health Resources - a Maltese perspective*'. The evenings' titles were 'The health care provider' - Dr Ray Xerri; 'The health care professional' - Dr Denis Soler; and 'The client, the patient or the consumer' - Rev. Prof. George Grima. The co-sponsors were Leo and Unigreg.

Accreditation was granted by the College to:

- A lecture on '**H. pylori - Past, Present and Future**' given by Dr Mario Vassallo on the 15th May and the 5th June 1998, organised by GlaxoWellcome.
- Seminar on **Presentation Skills and Techniques** and the **Maltese Forensic Medicine Conference** which took place on October 10 1998 and November 6 - 7 1998 respectively, both organised by Eli Lilly.
- The international conference "**Ageing - a Challenge for the New Millennium**" held at St Vincent de Paule Residence for the Elderly on 3 - 6th February, 1999.
- The **Take Care 2** series of lectures on depression during March - June 1999, organised by SmithKline Beecham.

- A lecture entitled '**International Service Standards in the care of persons with MS**' given by Mr Reid Nicholson on the 7th April 1999, organised by the **Multiple Sclerosis Society of Malta**.
- The **1st Infection Control Conference** to be held on 6th November 1999.

LOCAL NEWS:

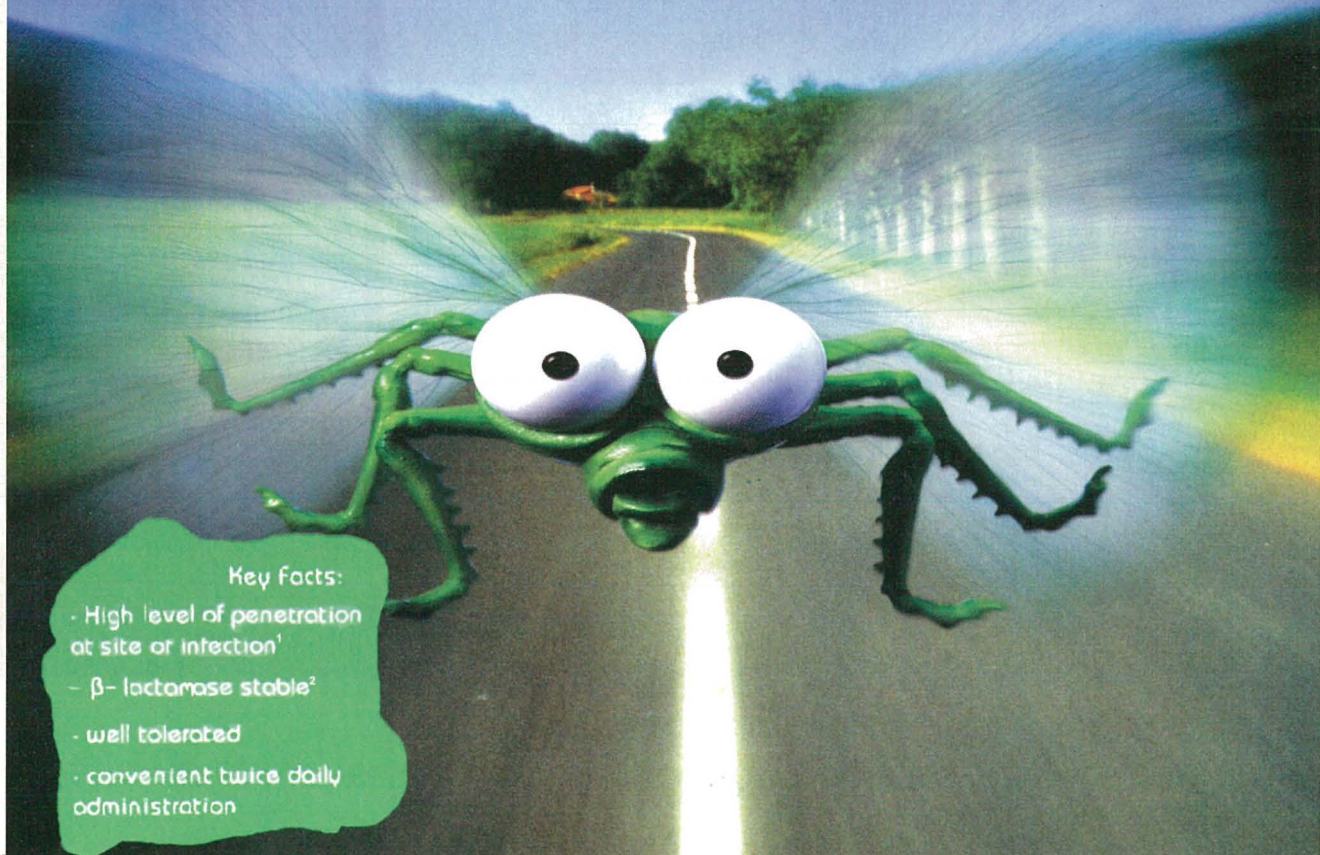
- A meeting with the **Minister of Health** Dr Michael Farrugia took place on the 20th May 1998. Dr D Soler, Dr M R Sammut and Dr P Sciortino represented the College. The main message given to the Minister was regarding the need for the introduction of local structures by the Government (e.g. requisites to enable a doctor to practice as a family physician) so that academic initiatives proposed by the College would therefore come to fruition. A copy of the approved Policy Document on Family Medicine in Malta was presented to the Minister.
- Dr A P Azzopardi and Dr M R Sammut represented the College at a meeting regarding the **New Hospital at Tal-Qroqq** held on the 5th June 1998 with Dr Kenneth Grech from the Department of Institutional Health, the hospital architect and the foreign consultants. Those present received favourably the College's suggestions, including GP empowerment, admitting rights, and premises for the College at the Medical School.
- A meeting was held in June 1998 between College representatives (Drs M R Sammut, J K Soler and W Galea) and representatives of the Health Division (Drs R Busuttil, M Micallef, D Falzon, and Mr B Cassar) regarding the **inadequate communication between the Health Division and family doctors**.

Points raised and discussed included the use of electronic mail, The SYNAPSE, the College Journal, the speeding up of postal circulars (timed with press releases), and the improvement of referral and discharge letters and of forms for notification of infectious diseases and vaccination.

- Following the change of government in September 1998, the College was invited by Dr R Busuttil, as representative of the new Minister of Health Dr Louis Deguara, to start discussions, together with the Department of Primary Health care and MAM, re the reorganisation of Primary Health Care. In February 1999, Dr D Soler gave Council an overview of the ensuing document, entitled **Reforms of the Primary Health Care Services**. Three systems were to be proposed to the cabinet for a definite commitment by the government before one is developed. Dr D Soler and Dr M R Sammut, who represented the College at the meetings, signed the document.
- **Letters to the media** were published as follows: 'Family Medicine in Malta and the EU' (Sunday Times, October 25); 'The importance and delivery of primary health care' (Malta Independent on Sunday, November 22); and 'Primary care still the Cinderella of medicine' (The Times, December 3), all written by Dr M R Sammut; and 'Importance of Primary Care' (Sunday Times, 28th February 1999) written by Dr D Soler. An **interview** by Dr D Soler entitled '*Charter ghad-drittijiet tal-pazjent*' was carried in *l-orizzont* on the 24th April 1999.
- Drs D Soler, M R Sammut and P Sciortino represented



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Key Facts:

- High level of penetration at site of infection¹
- β -lactamase stable²
- well tolerated
- convenient twice daily administration

Abbreviated Prescribing Information Uses Zinnat is indicated for infections of upper and lower respiratory tract, skin and soft tissue. **Presentations** White tablets containing 125 mg, 250 mg and 500 mg cefuroxime axetil, suspension containing 125 mg cefuroxime axetil per 5 ml. **Dosage Adults:** Most infections - 250 mg twice daily. Lower respiratory tract infection - 250 mg twice daily. Pneumonia - 500 mg twice daily. Urinary tract infection - 125 mg twice daily. Pyelonephritis - 250 mg twice daily. Uncomplicated gonorrhoea - 1 g single dose. **Children:** Most infections - 125 mg twice daily. Otitis media - 3 months to 2 years 125 mg twice daily, 2 years to 12 years 250 mg twice daily. Tablets should not be chewed or crushed and therefore are not suitable for children under five years of age. Zinnat should be taken after food for optimum absorption. **Contra-indications** Hypersensitivity to cephalosporin antibiotics. **Precautions** Zinnat may, in general, be given to patients who are hypersensitive to penicillins, although cross-reactions have been reported with some cephalosporins and special care indicated in patients who have experienced anaphylactic reaction to penicillin. Cefuroxime axetil should be administered with caution during early months of pregnancy. **Side effects** Gastrointestinal disturbances including diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting had been reported, these are generally mild and transient in nature. As with all broad spectrum antibiotics, there have been rare reports of pseudomembranous colitis. Rarely, hypersensitivity reactions, eosinophilia and transient increase of hepatic enzyme levels have been noted. **Package quantities** All strengths of tablets are supplied in foil strips in packs of 10. Suspension is supplied in bottles containing 50 ml and 100 ml.

References:

1. Perry CM & Brogden RN. *Drugs* 1996; 52(1): 125-158.
2. ZINNAT Approved Product Information.

GlaxoWellcome
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Berkeley Avenue, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 0NN, U.K.

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Prescribing information: Name of medicinal product Hidrasedc. **Qualitative and quantitative composition**

Hidrasedc capsules are ivory in colour; each capsule contains 100mg racecadotril.

Pharmaceutical form Capsule for oral use.

Clinical particulars *Therapeutic indications* Hidrasedc is indicated for the treatment of acute diarrhoea. *Dosage and administration* Hidrasedc should be given in conjunction with oral or parenteral rehydration therapy in patients where dehydration has occurred or is suspected. *Ages 15 years and above:* Treatment should be initiated with a single 100mg capsule given regardless of the time. Further treatment is given approximately eight-hourly until cessation of diarrhoea. The daily dose should not

exceed 400mg. If symptoms persist for more than seven days, the patient should then seek medical advice. *Elderly subjects:* An adjustment of dose is not necessary in elderly subjects. *Ages under 15 years:* Hidrasedc capsules are not recommended for use in children under 15 years. *Contraindications* Known hypersensitivity to racecadotril. *Special warnings and precautions for use* Refer to 'Dosage and administration'. *Interaction with other medicaments and other forms of interaction* No specific studies in humans have been performed. Racecadotril does not inhibit or induce cytochrome P450 in animal models. *Pregnancy and lactation* Adequate human data on use during pregnancy are not available. However, animal studies have not identified any risk to

pregnancy or embryo-foetal development. Hidrasedc should not be used in pregnancy unless the potential benefits outweigh the risks. Adequate human data on use in lactation are not available. However, animal studies have not identified any risk to lactation or the breast-fed offspring. *Effects on ability to drive and use machines* No adverse effects on the ability to drive or operate machinery have been identified. *Undesirable effects* A few cases of drowsiness have been reported during clinical trials. Nausea and vomiting, constipation, dizziness and headaches have also been reported rarely. The side-effects have been mild, and equivalent in nature, frequency and intensity to those reported with placebo. Post-marketing surveillance has indicated side-effects are extremely

rare in general use. *Overdose* Individual doses of 2g, i.e. 20 times the therapeutic dose for the treatment of acute diarrhoea, have been administered in clinical trials without causing any harmful effects. No incident of accidental overdosage has been reported. No specific antidote has been identified, and management should follow recognized procedures for overdose. **Pharmacological properties** *Pharmacodynamic properties* Hidrasedc is an inhibitor of enkephalinase, the enzyme responsible for breaking down enkephalins. It is a selective but reversible inhibitor and protects endogenous enkephalins which are physiologically active in the digestive tract. Hidrasedc is a pure intestinal antiseecretory agent which has been shown to have no

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effect on gastrointestinal motility. It reduces intestinal hypersecretion of water and electrolytes caused by cholera toxin or inflammation without affecting basal secretion. There is therefore no effect in the normal intestine. When given orally, enkephalinase inhibition is purely peripheral. Hidrasec does not affect central nervous system enkephalinase activity, and has not been shown to produce habituation or central nervous stimulant or sedative effects. **Pharmacokinetic properties** Racecadotril is rapidly absorbed by the oral route. It is rapidly hydrolysed to (RS)-N-(1-oxo-2-(mercaptomethyl)-3-phenylpropyl) glycine, its active metabolite, which is in turn converted into inactive metabolites which are eliminated through the kidneys, faeces and lungs. The extent and duration of action of

racecadotril depends on the dose administered. Activity against plasma enkephalinase starts within 30 minutes, with peak activity corresponding to 75% inhibition for a dose of 100mg, occurring one to three hours after administration. The biological half-life of racecadotril is three hours. For a dose of 100mg the duration of activity against plasma enkephalinase is about eight hours. (RS)-N-(1-oxo-2-(mercaptomethyl)-3-phenylpropyl) glycine, the active metabolite of racecadotril, is 90% bound to plasma proteins, mainly albumin. Tissue distribution only affects about 1% of the administered dose. The pharmacokinetic properties of racecadotril are not changed by repeated administration or in elderly subjects. The bioavailability of racecadotril is not affected by food

but the peak activity is delayed by one and a half hours. **Preclinical safety data** No further information of relevance. **Pharmaceutical particulars** *List of excipients* Lactose, maize starch, magnesium stearate, colloidal anhydrous silica. Capsule contains gelatin, titanium dioxide (E171), yellow iron oxide (E172). **Incompatibilities** None known. **Shelf-life** The expiry date is indicated on the packaging. **Special precautions for storage** Store below 30°C. **Nature and contents of container** Hidrasec 100mg capsules; blister packs of nine capsules in a carton. **Instructions for use/handling** No further information of relevance. Racecadotril will be available under the trade mark Hidrasec* but in some countries will be known as Tiorfan*. Tiorfan* and Hidrasec* are marketed under

licence from Bioprojet (France). *Trade mark
References 1. Bergmann JF, et al. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther* 1992; **6**: 305-313. 2. Hamza H, et al. *Gastroenterology* 1992; **102**: A13. 3. Data on file, Bioprojet. 4. Baumer PH, et al. *Gut* 1992; **33**: 753-758.

Further information is available from SmithKline Beecham International, IHQ, SB House, Great West Road, Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 9BD, England



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the College at a meeting with the Dean of the University of Malta's Faculty of Medicine and Surgery on the 3rd February 1999. The Dean, Prof. Mark Brincat, announced that he had included the **setting-up of a Department of Family Medicine** in his Strategic Plan for the Faculty for 1998-2000. He also invited Dr Denis Soler, as President of the College, to chair an ad-hoc Advisory Committee on Family Medicine, whose main aim will be to set up an undergraduate and postgraduate programme in family Medicine and start up a new Academic Department in Family Medicine. This was confirmed in a letter to Dr Soler dated 8th February 1999. It was decided that the committee initially is formed of Drs D Soler, M R Sammut and P Sciortino.

- Drs D Soler, M R Sammut and J G Pace represented the College at a courtesy **meeting with the Prime Minister**, the Ministers of Health and Education, and the Parliamentary Secretary in the PM's Office, at Castille on the 12th February 1999 at 10 a.m. During the meeting Dr D 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. The Prime Minister and his Ministers were presented with the College's 'Policy Document on Family Medicine in Malta', and its 'Recommendations for the future development of Primary Care in Malta', and the 'Specialist Training Pro-

gramme'. A press release on the meeting was issued on the 18th February 1999.

- On 20th February 1999, it was announced that College founder and Council member **Dr Ray Busuttil** was appointed **Director General (Health)**.
- On the 23rd April 1999 Dr D Soler had a meeting with Prof. M Brincat, Dean of the University Faculty of Medicine & Surgery, in the presence of Prof. H Gilles from the Department of Public Health, Mr J Bartolo from the University Administration and Mr J Borg, Medical School Secretary. A formal letter was written to the University Rector requesting the formation of the **Department of Family Medicine**, and the foundation of a Masters in General Practice once the department was functioning. During the same meeting, Dr P Sciortino was appointed to the University's **Undergraduate Curriculum sub-committee**.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS:

- In May 1998, the College welcomed its **first overseas member**, Dr Nadeem Gazdar, a family doctor from Pakistan who was working in Malaysia.
- In May 1998, Dr J G Pace presented to the Council the **UEMO Reference Book 1998-99**, with two articles written by him on the Malta College of Family Doctors and on 'GP/FM in Malta'.
- Dr A Mifsud represented the College at the **EGPRW Meeting, Bergen, 7-10 May 1998**. During a meeting of the board with national representatives, final preparations were discussed with Prof. F Dobbs regarding the Research Methods Course to be held in Malta over the two weekends of 19-

21 and 26-27 September 1998 (later postponed to 1999).

- In May 1998, Dr P Sciortino participated in the second part of the **RCGP International Teachers' Course (November 1997, May 1998)**.
- Dr D Soler represented the College at the **WONCA World Meeting, Dublin, June 1998**. Dr D Soler attended for the WONCA Europe Council Meeting, in his capacity of member of such Council - a new President was elected from Holland. Dr Soler also represented the College at the WONCA World council meeting - he reported that WONCA World also has a new President from the USA, and that a president-elect had been appointed from Ireland. Dr Soler announced an invitation from the Mediterranean Medical Society for the College to host a meeting in Malta in 2000.
- Dr A P Azzopardi represented the College at the **EQUIP Meeting, Dublin, June 1998**. A paper presented by him was included in an EQUIP publication entitled 'Tools and Methods for Quality Improvement in General Practice'.
- Dr J K Soler participated in the **ICPC Meeting, Dublin, June 1998**, and was appointed to two ICPC working groups regarding the ICPC website and ICPC-2.
- In September 1998, Dr M R Sammut was appointed as delegate of the College to **EUROPREV**, the European Review Group on Health Promotion and Prevention in Family Medicine.
- Dr A Mifsud and Dr J K Soler participated in the **EGPRW Meeting Heraklion, 22-25 October 1998**, where Dr Soler gave two presentations.

- In December 1998 the **Mediterranean Medical Society** officially requested that the College host its next conference in 2000.
- Drs D & J K Soler attended for a successful meeting in Athens with the Council of the **Mediterranean Medical Society** on the 6th February 1999. The Society welcomed the active involvement of the College in the Society as a "breath of fresh air". While Dr D Soler is to update the Society's Statute and the College is to have representation on its Council, the College was awarded the organisation of the **6th Mediterranean Medical Congress and Summer School** to be held in Malta during the first week of September 2000.
- By invitation, an **article on general/family practice in Malta** by Dr M R Sammut was

published the UK family doctor newspaper '**General Practitioner**' during the edition for the week ending March 19 1999.

- An invitation dated 12th April 1999 was received by Dr M R Sammut from EUROPREV to **co-chair a Workshop** on Cardiovascular Diseases on 20th May 1999 during the First European Networks Organisations Open Conference - WONCA '99 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

MEMBERSHIP & ACCREDITATION:

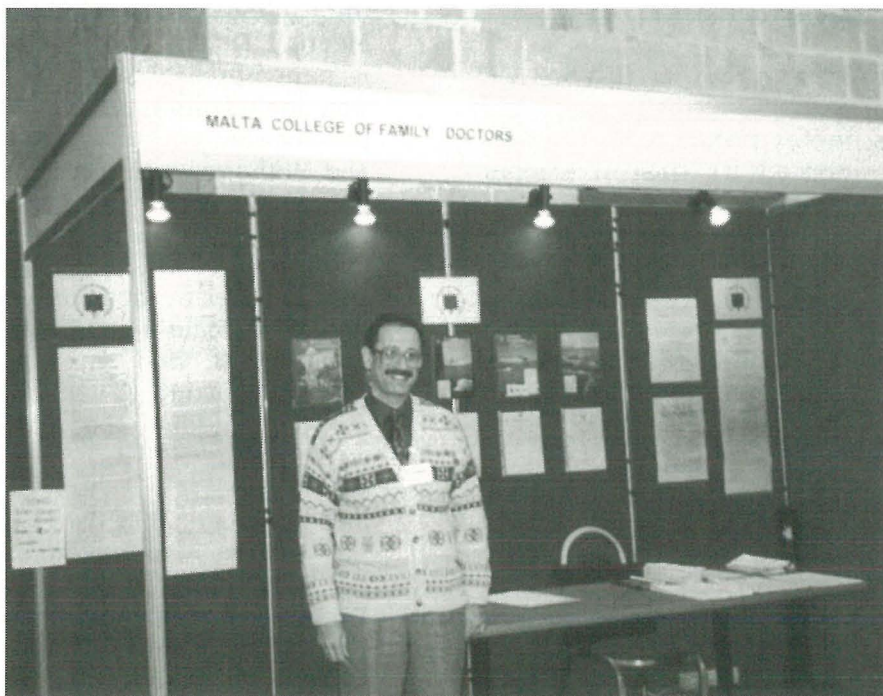
- 13 College members failed to pay their 1998 subscription fee by the end of October 1998 despite repeated reminders. As such, these were **deleted from the College's register** as per Council decision of 13/9/94.

- **Membership at present** stands at 124.
- **74 college members were accredited for 1998**, 27 of which have maintained their accreditation status for the eight consecutive years since 1991.

COLLEGE JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER:

- One issue of the College Journal (June 1998) was published during the past year. The newsletter continues to be sent on a regular basis (every one or two months) exclusively to College members, with local and international news of special interest to family doctors.

24th April, 1999



Mario Sammut on duty! The MCFD Honorary Secretary in front of the College stand at the 4th Maltese Medical School Conference, March 1999. (Photo courtesy of Joanna Cremona, Vivian Commercial Corp. Ltd.)

MALTA COLLEGE OF FAMILY DOCTORS COUNCIL 1999-2002

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Dr. Joseph G. Pace

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Secretary for Research:

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Dr. John P. Gauci

Dr. Frank P. Calleja