

# MALTA COLLEGE OF FAMILY DOCTORS

## SECRETARY'S REPORT OF COLLEGE ACTIVITIES 2001-2

M. R. SAMMUT

HONORARY SECRETARY, MCFD

### 1. Council meetings:

Six meetings were held since the last AGM of 17/4/2001, the last of which was on 5/3/2002. Two of these meetings were special half-day meetings, with that on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2001 discussing a strategy for the College and a new format for the CPD Scheme, while on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2001 the new CPD Format was developed further into a proposal for Membership by Assessment. Council members' attendance was as follows:

A P Azzopardi	6
J K Soler	6
F P Calleja	6
M A Borg	5
W Galea	6
A Mifsud	5
M R Sammut	6
J G Pace	5
P Sciortino	6
J P Gauci	2
D Soler	6

### 2. ICGP Diploma Course in Therapeutics:

Under the coordination of Council member Dr A P Azzopardi, a one-year **Distance Learning Diploma in Therapeutics for General Practice** organised by the Irish College of General Practitioners was launched under the auspices of the MCFD on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2001, with 14 local family doctors participating. Cherubino Ltd. kindly accepted

to host the two workshops in September and December 2001 led by Dr Margaret O' Riordan and Dr Ailis Ni Riain from the ICGP. A number of companies (AstraZeneca, the Corinthia Group, the Foundation for Medical Services, the Galaxy Hotel, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, Pharma-Cos and Solvay Pharma) sponsored other expenses, including the flights and board of the ICGP tutors for these workshops. The College Council agreed that the College cover any remaining expenses.

### 3. CPD Activities:

- The **Spring CPD Meeting 2001** was held at the Medical School on the 25-27 April 2001 as a **Paediatric Update** in collaboration with the Maltese Paediatric Association, with the following programme:
  - o Wednesday 25th: 'School Failure' – Dr Doriette Soler, Paediatrician and Mr Stanley Zammit, Educational Psychologist;
  - o Thursday 26th: 'Common Presenting Symptoms of Malignant Diseases in Childhood' – Dr Victor Calvagna, Paediatrician; 'Heart Disease in Childhood' – Dr Victor Grech, Paediatrician;
  - o Friday 27th: 'Interactive Paediatric Slide Presentation' – Dr Simon Attard Montalto, Paediatrician. Sponsors were Charles de Giorgio Ltd.
- A one-day seminar on '**Special concerns of women**' was organised by the College

in collaboration with the Malta College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Eli Lilly on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2001.

- o The **Autumn CPD Meeting 2001 'A Psychiatric Update'** was organised on 3-5 October 2001 in collaboration with the Association of Maltese Psychiatrists, with sponsorship by V J Salomone (Trading) Ltd. The programme was as follows:
  - o Wednesday 3rd: 'The Confused Patient' - Dr Anton Grech, Psychiatrist.
  - o Thursday 4th: 'The Anxious Patient' – Dr Peter Muscat, Psychiatrist.
  - o Friday 5th: 'Optimising Treatment Modalities' – Dr Joseph Cassar, Psychiatrist.
- A one-day seminar entitled **Immunisation Update 2001/2** was co-organised on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2001 at the Corinthia San Gorg Hotel in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Immunisation Policy, the Primary Health Care Department, the Department of Paediatrics and GlaxoSmithKline.
- A full-day **Seminar on Epilepsy** 'L-Epilessija fil-Miftuh' was co-organised with the Caritas-Malta Epilepsy Association and the Epilepsy Society of Malta on the 3rd November 2001.
- On the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2001, a joint CPD Meeting entitled '**Diet and its Role in Prevention: The WHO-CINDI Approach**' was organised

- with the **Health Promotion Department** at the Coastline Hotel, Salina, with the following programme: 'Family doctors and health promotion: do we practise what we preach?' - Dr Mario R Sammut; 'Malta and the WHO-CINDI Programme' - Ms Maria Ellul; 'The WHO-CINDI Dietary Guide' - Ms Yvette Azzopardi
- The **Winter CPD Meeting 2002** on 'Diabetes Mellitus in the Maltese Islands' was held on 23-25 January 2002 at the University of Malta Medical School, in collaboration with the University Department of Medicine. This meeting marked a landmark by being the first held under the auspices of the new **University Department of Family Medicine**. It was sponsored by Servier Malta, and had the following programme:
    - o Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>: 'Epidemiology of Type 2 Diabetes' - Prof. Joseph Azzopardi, Consultant Physician; 'Gestational Diabetes and its Management' - Mr Charles Savona Ventura, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist.
    - o Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>: 'Paediatric Diabetes and Maturity-Onset Diabetes of the Young' - Dr Antoine G Schranz, Consultant Diabetologist; 'Diabetic Retinopathy' - Mr Thomas Fenech, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon.
    - o Friday 25<sup>th</sup>: 'The Diabetic Foot' - Dr Mario J Cachia, Consultant Physician; 'Diabetic Nephropathy' - Dr Stephen Fava, Consultant Physician; 'The Metabolic Syndrome and New Frontiers in Diabetes Management' - Prof. Joseph Azzopardi, Consultant Physician.
  - The College also approved requests for accreditation of the following activities under its CPD Scheme:
    - o The 2001 **Corinthia Paediatric Research Fund Annual Lecture** entitled 'Latest developments in childhood leukaemia' and given by Dr Vaskar Saha on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2001.
    - o The **Bioethics Conference 2001** held on 26-27 October 2001, with the first evening regarding 'Genetic Testing' and the second 'End of Life Issues'.
- #### 4. LOCAL NEWS:
- In July 2001, Council accepted a request from the Health Promotion Department for the College to collaborate in reviewing Malta's versions for GPs and the general public of Europe against Cancer's '**European Code against Cancer - a tool for general practitioners**' published by the European Community. In September 2001, Dr M R Sammut distributed to each Council member for review a different point from the Maltese draft version. Dr M R Sammut, as College Secretary, participated actively in the launch of **Malta's 10-Point Prevention Code Against Cancer** on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2002.
  - In July 2001, Dr Janet Mifsud, National Chairperson FP5, assisted by Ms Nadine Cauchi and Dr Marvic Sammut, gave a presentation to the College Council on the **EU 5th Framework Programme for Research and Technology Development**. The FP5 team recommended that the easiest way to participate would be to see if there existed a project one could link to. Otherwise one could prepare an original proposal, which would be more difficult.
  - In October 2001, a presentation '**A Marketing Proposal for the MCFD**' was made to the College Council by Ms Rosette Thake and Mr Hilary Caruana from Outlook Coop, following which it was decided that an ad-hoc meeting be held by Council on the subject.
  - In October 2001, the Council nominated Dr Jean Karl Soler as College representative to a meeting organised by the **Medical Association of Malta** to discuss a **new agreement with the Association of Medical Insurers**. Council asked Dr Soler to present again the College's recommendations made in the Council meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001, together with another that the limit for GP expenses be increased.
  - In October 2001, Dr P Sciortono, as Chairman of the College's CME Sub-Committee, recommended the following **Strategy for the future regarding the College's CPD Programme**:
    - o The presentation be improved as regards venue, publicity and refreshments.
    - o The academic content be improved according to the needs (not wishes) ascertained according to research. Council here asked Dr Sciortono to analyse the results (with secretarial help) of the survey he had done on the subject.
    - o The format of teaching be practice-based and informal, taking place in small groups.
    - o The topics are not always clinically based, but should also include other topics like academic family practice and practice management.
  - In November 2001, a ad-hoc Council meeting was held to

discuss **strategic suggestions for the further development of the College**, where the following recommendations were made:

- o **MARKETING:** making use of stationery and rubber-stamps, patient handouts with College logo, a series of articles in the Times Weekender, and the MCFD Newsletter.
- o **SUB-COMMITTEES** to be set up regarding group practices, doctor-patient registration cards, and membership by examination.
- The introduction of **MEMBERSHIP / CERTIFICATE COURSES**.
- The seeking of **STRATEGIC PARTNER/S**.
- **OTHER TOPICS:** a cooperative of private GPs; practice certification; setting up of a College archive; a version of the Journal on CD; small group meetings, e.g. a journal club; multimedia presentations for clinic waiting rooms; targeting children in schools.
- Also in November 2001, Council agreed to push for **revamping the format of the CPD Scheme** by introducing **membership by examination (MMCFD)** to be held over a two-year period, with the first year devoted to the core (theory and principles) of family medicine, and the second year covering clinical aspects of family medicine. The format of the CPD programme would need to be changed to 9 monthly sessions over each year, each session with a form of assessment for those College members who wish to go beyond accreditation to membership by assessment.

- In December 2001, the College Council directed Dr P Sciortino to start making arrangements with the Royal College of General Practitioners for a **Teachers' Course** to be organised locally over 2 or 3 weekends.
- In December 2001, Council approved for distribution a **press release**, prepared by Dr W Galea, recommending health-care funding from tobacco tax.
- In February 2002, Prof. Joseph Cacciottolo requested that the College be an academic sponsor of the local **Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease Guidelines** he co-wrote with Dr Maria Cordina, after having asked 4 members of the College Council to review such guidelines. This request was accepted after e-mail consultation between the members of the College Council
- In March 2002, Drs W Galea, A P Azzopardi and F P Calleja presented Council with a one-page proposal regarding '**Provision of Emergency Medical Cover during Weekends and Public Holidays**'. Council agreed that this proposal be developed further.
- In March 2002, Dr J K Soler announced that **Prof. Henk Lamberts and Dr Inge Okkes** from the Department of Family Practice, University of Amsterdam, will be visiting Malta during April-May 2002 and will be holding two meetings with College members using Transhis.

#### 5. INTERNATIONAL NEWS:

- In June 2001, Dr J K Soler and Dr A Mifsud participated in the **2001 Regional WONCA Europe Conference** in Tampere, Finland.

- In October 2001, Dr J K Soler participated in the **EGPRW meeting** in Gdansk/Gdynia, Poland.
- In November 2001, Dr M R Sammut participated in the **EUROPREV Council Meeting** in Barcelona, Spain.
- In November 2001 Prof. Dame Lesley Southgate, **President of the Royal College of General Practitioners**, wrote to thank the College for its encouragement and support expressed in an e-mail sent by Hon. Secretary Dr M R Sammut. The contents of such e-mail were published in the December 2001 edition of the British Journal of General Practice.
- In January 2002 Dr Daniel J Ostergaard, Vice President International and Interprofessional Activities of the **American Academy of Family Physicians**, wrote to congratulate the College on its role in the establishment of the Department of Family Medicine at the Malta Medical School.

#### 6. Membership and Accreditation:

- **Membership at present stands at 138.**
- **Twenty-seven College members were accredited for 2001**, 13 of which have maintained their accreditation status for the eleven consecutive years since 1991.

#### 7. College Journal and Newsletter:

- In March 2002, Council accepted the request of Dr J K Soler, Editor of the **College Journal**, that the **print run** be raised from 1000 to 1500 to cater for recently qualified doctors and for copies being sent abroad. Dr Soler

announced with regret the **resignation** of Dr Wilfred Galea from the Journal's Editorial Board, which now consisted of just two Maltese members (himself and Dr M R Sammut) and Prof. Christos Lionis from Greece.

- Two issues of the **College Journal** (December 2000 and June 2001) were published since the last AGM.
- The **December 2000 issue** (No. 19) marked an important change in name to '**The Family Physician / It-Tabib tal-Familja**' and its launch as an international

Mediterranean Journal of Family Medicine. Also from this issue, the Journal started accepting papers from other Mediterranean countries, commencing with an article from Israel. Moreover, all Family Medicine articles are now being reviewed, beginning with the two GP-related articles in this issue, namely 'Primary Care Services in Malta: Provision, Utilisation and Reform' and 'Utilisation of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Primary Care – What are the Relations between it and Conventional Medicine?'

- The **June 2001 issue** (No. 20) incorporated two articles related to family/general practice. These were entitled 'Ethical Issues in Family Practice' and 'Paediatric Heart Disease in General Practice'.
- The **MCFD Newsletter** continues to be sent on a regular basis exclusively to College members, with local and international news of special interest to family doctors.