



THE INAUGURATION OF THE PHARMACY PRACTICE UNIT AT THE DEPARTMENT

The Pharmacy Practice Resource Unit (PPRU) at the Department of Pharmacy of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, was inaugurated during the last academic year. The Rector of the University of Malta, Professor Juanito Camilleri, Pro-Rector for Research and Innovation, Professor Richard Muscat and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Professor Godfrey Laferla presided over the ceremony.

The PPRU is a community pharmacy simulation providing pharmacy students with a location that allows research-informed and practice-based learning. The concept was developed by Professor Lilian M. Azzopardi, Head of the Department of Pharmacy, Professor Anthony Serracino-Inglott, immediate past head of department and Dr. Maurice Zarb-Adami, project supervisor. The project was started in 2004 and pharmacy students at the time Elisa Nicholl, Arlette Seychell and Simone Bartolo participated in studies related to its development and evaluation. It was lately updated and evaluated by Jaclyn Azzopardi, a Master of Pharmacy student. Setting up this unit was possible thanks to the contribution of a number of pharmaceutical companies who donated medicines, medical devices, product literature and books.

During the inauguration, Jaclyn Azzopardi presented an insight into the development of the PPRU and outlined the various sections present in the unit. The largest section is the medication display containing medicines which are currently available on the local market. Discontinued medicines, a wound care display, vitamins and health supplements and baby formulas are displayed in separate sections. Moreover, patients who present at a community pharmacy often request their medicine based on the appearance of the dosage form. This scenario may pose a difficulty for the pharmacist since many medicines are packaged in sealed blister packs. A tablet and capsule display exposing pharmacy students to the appearance of tablets and capsules is included in the PPRU. The results of the work by Jaclyn Azzopardi were presented at the Academic Section of the Centennial Congress of the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) last October.

Research is carried out in the PPRU through books and journals, product literature, patient information leaflets, protocol booklets and electronic databases. Another section consists of various point-of-care testing medical devices which are used by pharmacy students during practical sessions and in their pharmacy practice project to gain skills in blood pressure measurement, blood glucose, HbA1c, cholesterol, haemoglobin and anticoagulation monitoring and other clinical analysis parameters.

A quality system is developed for all the laboratories of the Department of Pharmacy and in the PPRU each medical device is accompanied by a standard operating procedure and a logbook. A section dedicated to the PPRU can be accessed from the website of the Pharmacy Department: www.um.edu.mt/ms/pharmacy/ppru.

During the inauguration, pharmacist Lawrence Zerafa donated historical pharmacy books dating back to 1800. The collection includes books from different aspects in pharmacy; namely, The British Pharmaceutical Codex, Pharmaceutical Formulas, A text-book of Bacteriology and also several publications in Italian 'Trattato di Chimica'. This donation complements the collection of historical pharmacy items and books at the Department. During his presentation, Mr. Zerafa encouraged anyone who has other historical pharmacy books to donate them to the Department of Pharmacy.

The occasion was attended by Department of Pharmacy staff, students, pharmacists, department collaborators and Hon Dr Owen Bonnici, Opposition Spokesperson for Higher Education, University, Research and Culture.