

‘O wonder.

How many goodly creatures are there here! How beautiful mankind is! O brave new world! That has such people in't!’

This is how I wish to start the first editorial for this decade ... Miranda's speech in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, quoted ad verbatim by John the Savage in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Both characters are naive to the reality behind a vision, a vision which they did not know or understand. And indeed we are experiencing a Brave New World! We are seeing the world's population being vaccinated against a virus which has reportedly already mutated. This herd immunity may be spurred by reports, even locally, that presumably healthy people are dying because of this flu. On the other hand the WHO has also acknowledged that the actual number of persons worldwide who have contracted H1N1 virus is likely to be ten times what has been confirmed. So in reality the effects of the virus may also be very mild. And amidst all this we are also watching countries such as France, Germany, Netherlands and the UK selling extra H1N1 vaccines to developing countries such as Egypt and Qatar. Times are indeed changing ... in the past few years we have seen cocaine vaccines, cervical cancer vaccines, and today we are being vaccinated against a disease whose actual epidemiological prevalence, up to a couple of years ago was considered by many to be an extrapolation from a science fiction film ... indeed as Almroth Wright, a prime promoter of immunological procedures once said, 'The physician of tomorrow will be the immunisator'.

The decade which 2010 heralds will also be exciting for other reasons. Locally, John Dalli, Malta's Commissioner, has been assigned the health and consumer policy portfolio by the European Commission. For the first time, this will encompass pharmaceutical and medical devices policy. The effects will obviously ripple between the corridors of parliament since another MP (or MPs) has to take up his post. This decade we will also be experiencing the debates arising from the Assisted Procreation Committee which was set up last year under the stewardship of our colleague Dr Jean-Pierre Farrugia; and the reforms within public health, namely, the Consultation Document on the proposals for the Reform in Primary Care in Malta, and the reported hiring of the facilities of private hospitals by the government to tackle the bed shortage at Mater Dei Hospital. And if you still have doubt that this decade will not be as exciting as the last one ... beyond our shores, we will most probably be spectators to the launching of bionic contact lenses to monitor patient health conditions, such as hypercholesterolaemia; further public health measures including the recent junk-food tax as seen in Romania to tackle the obesity pandemic; and many more mergers and take-overs such as the Novartis' offer to buy the rest of Alcon from Nestle and other shareholders for \$39 billion, communicated last month. Need I still try to convince you?

Ian Ellul
Ian C Ellul

Email: editor@thesynapse.net

Web: www.thesynapse.net

Editor: Wilfred Galea

Scientific editor: Ian C Ellul

Administration Manager: Carmen Cachia

Designer: - Jeff Galea

Printer - Europrint Ltd.

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Front Page



Borage
(*Borago officinalis*;
Fidloqqom)

A common annual with large, prickly, hairy leaves and star-shaped, purple-blue flowers. Prefers disturbed ground or fields which lie fallow. Flowers in winter and spring.

Medicinal uses: as an infusion has been used as an expectorant, antipyretic, diuretic and to promote milk flow in nursing mothers. As a compress, has been used to relieve the pain and swelling of bruises and inflamed wounds.

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