

Pharmaceutical Journals in Malta

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Two decades ago the Malta Union of Pharmacists published the first number of its journal for the period October-December 1967. The occurrence of this twentieth anniversary presents an appropriate occasion to cast a glance at other pharmaceutical journals that preceded and followed the publication of the journal of the MUP.

Progresso Medico Chirurgico, 1920-21

The earliest journal to be published in Malta that has some bearing on pharmaceutical practice was the **Progresso Medico Chirurgico** which made its appearance on the 1st December 1920. It was a monthly 8-10 paged publication whose editor and proprietor was Mr. Ciro Cherubino. Its articles were all in Italian though it offered its columns to contributions in the English language as well.

As its title implies, its appeal was to the medical profession but its editor invited literary material not only from the **Camera Medica di Malta** but also from the **Camera Farmaceutica di Malta**.

Among the medical themes dealt with were infantile mortality; the importance of vaccination; physiotherapy; otitis; and the detection of albumin in the urine and its quantitative estimation by means of the Esbach's albuminometer.

Medical practitioners, however, did not have a complete monopoly of this journal. In fact in the issue of April 1921, the editor informed his readers that the **Progresso** was now being published under the auspices of the **Camera Farmaceutica di Malta**. The pharmaceutical slant is represented by the insertion of advertisements of (a) Portelli's Dispensary at Pawla announcing the sale of "very pure medicinals", patent medicines, oxygen, surgical instruments and suturing materials and air and water mattresses and cushions; and of Dr. A. Mizzi's The Original English Dispensary at 32 Piazza San Giovanni, Valletta; and (b) preparations from Italian drug manufacturers such as Proton (its basic components being iron and phosphates) for anaemia and "general debility"; Asmalisin, in the form of hypodermic injections of extracts of suprarenal gland and of the posterior lobe of the pituitary gland, for the relief of asthma; **fermenti lattici** for intestinal infections especially of infants;

Comunicazioni Ufficiali.



CAMERA FARMACEUTICA DI MALTA.

La suddetta Camera nella sua seduta del 16 Aprile a.c. procedette alle elezioni del Comitato per il biennio 1921—1922 che risultò così costituito:

Presidente,

Sigr. Andrea German.

Vice-presidente,

Sigr. Alf. Gera Depetri.

Segretario,

Sigr. Goffredo Laferla M.P.S.

Ass: Segretario,

Sigr. Alf. Mizzi.

Tesoriere,

Sigr. Gius. Muscat.

Membri:

Sigr. A. L. Barrett M.P.S.,

Sigr. S. R. Speranza;

Sigr. S. Tabone,

Sigr. On. J. Vassallo.

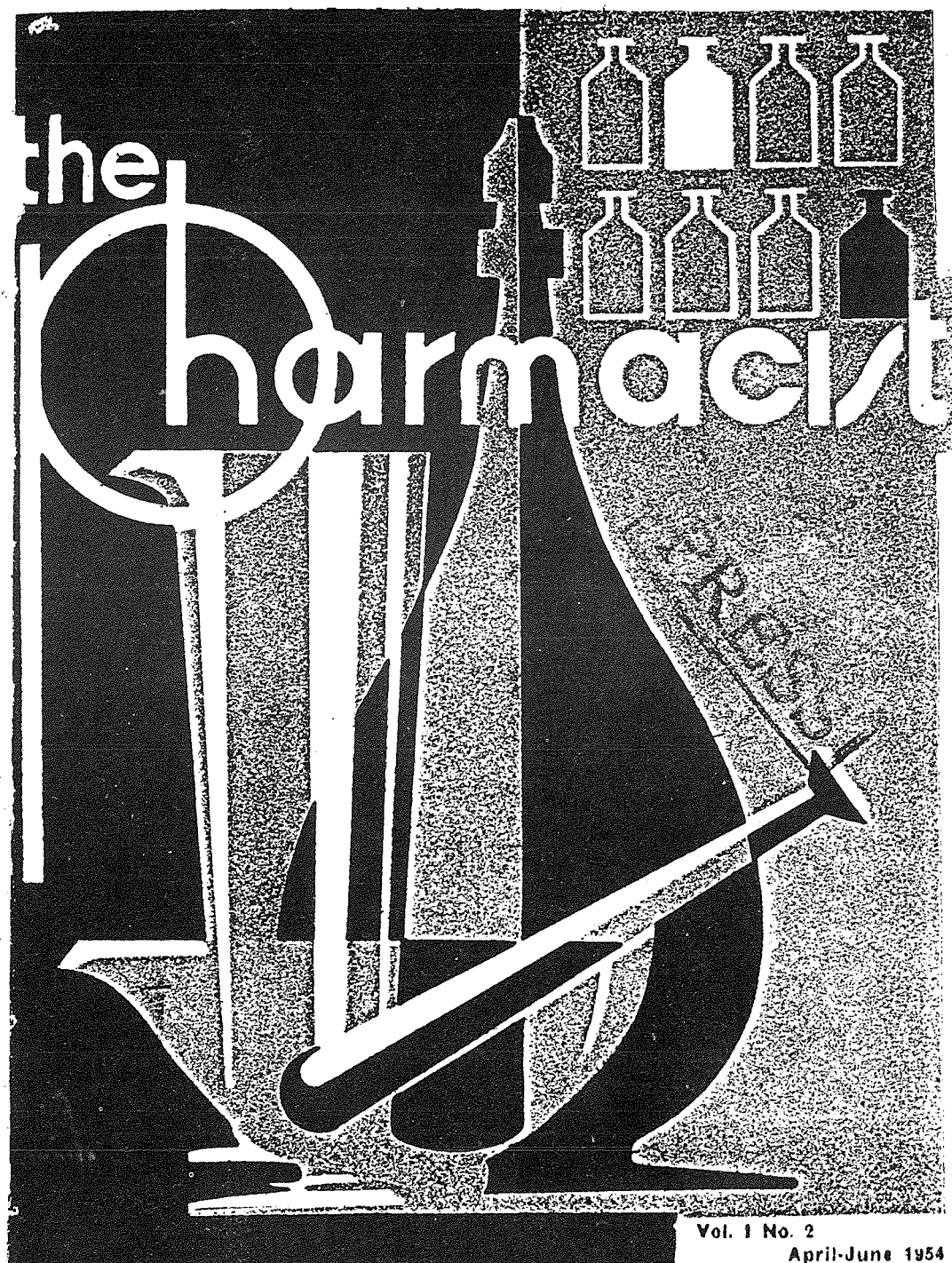
Consulatore legale,

Sigr. Dr. Serafino Vella LL.D.

Il Segretario

Goffredo La Ferla M.P.S.

IL PROGRESSO—1o. Aprile, 1921.



The front cover of 'THE PHARMACIST' published between 1954 and 1955. It's Editor was Pharmacist Mr. George Saliba. The cover design is by Envin Cremona.

and Cerebral for "nervous exhaustion" the main ingredients of which were calcium and sodium glycono-phosphates, Fowler's Solution and Nux Vomica powder.

Of more direct interest to pharmacists were the publication of (a) the members of the committee of the **Camera Farmaceutica** for the year 1921-22. The names of the members appeared under the circular logo of the **Camera** which showed the figure of the serpent coiled round the base of a bowl and dipping its tongue into it. This central emblem was flanked by two fronds of laurel leaves, one on each side. The whole was enclosed by the words round the rim **CAMERA FARMACEUTICA DI MALTA. FOND. A.D. 1900**; and (b) two short articles by anonymous writers which appeared in the issue of the 1st February 1921.

The first one discussed the advantages accruing from the establishment of professional associations to safeguard the material interests of the pharmacist. Through such an agency the profession could come to some arrangement regarding working hours, the closing of the pharmacy on Sundays and feast days and the creation of a uniform system in the fixing of prices of medicinals as was being done in other parts of the world such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Egypt, etc. In the writer's view such associations would have other beneficial results among which the promotion of frequent contacts between pharmacists that would tend to eliminate "feelings of mistrust and suspicion among colleagues . . . which in Malta were stronger than elsewhere and especially among pharmacists of the same district".

The other article dealt with the hardships that the pharmacist had to face in giving his services to the public. He had, for instance, "to be available at all times during the day and night... always vigilant... without respite... and under continual nervous tension which wears away his brain owing to the very great responsibilities with which he is burdened". To crown it all, exclaims the perturbed author, when the patient recovers from his illness "the doctor takes all the glory".

The issue of the 1st October 1921 is of special interest for us to-day because it touches on a problem that has come to form one of society's greatest preoccupations and to which no adequate solution has yet been found i.e. the question of drug addiction. Sixty years ago the greatest concern in Europe centred round the abusive use of cocaine and opium. The article discusses

the efforts that were being made, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, to restrict the commerce of noxious drugs with a view of limiting, as much as possible, "the further diffusion of the use of morphine" and "of other toxic forms of addiction which ruin humanity".

This is the last issue of the **Progresso Medico Chirurgico** that I have been able to trace.

Bulletin of the Chamber of Pharmacists. 1953

The next publication on the part of the Chamber of Pharmacists appeared on the 1st July 1953 under the title of **Bulletin of the Chamber of Pharmacists**. It was a type-written four-paged newsletter.

It carried the information that the Chamber of Pharmacists, after "almost three years of inactivity" convened a meeting on the 7th June 1953 to discuss the following items: (a) election of the committee for that year; (b) the professional status of the pharmacist; (c) the need for an official tariff of fees; (d) revision of the statute of the Chamber; (e) and the possibility of obtaining the newly introduced degree of B.Pharm. at our university, by pharmacists who had qualified under the previous academic system.

It is not recorded whether any other numbers of the **Bulletin** were ever issued and, therefore, we are in the dark regarding any possible developments resulting from the items discussed at the 7th June meeting held at Palazzo Caraffa, Old Bakery Street, Valletta.

The Pharmacist. 1954-55

Between January 1954 and September 1955, the Chamber of Pharmacists initiated the publication of **The Pharmacist** with the scope of (a) diffusing current literature to keep the pharmacist abreast with new developments in his field; (b) helping to maintain members of the Chamber in touch with the activities of the Committee; and (c) providing a means by which the pharmacist could "air his aspirations, grievances and claims".

The main topics that engaged the profession of thirty years ago, as reflected by this journal, were:- (a) the concern about the large number of pharmacists, graduating from the university, that had increased 'out of proportion to the local requirements'; (b) the need for the recognition of the B.Pharm. degree by Commonwealth coun-

tries and the USA to enable Maltese graduates to emigrate to these places; (c) the establishment of a professional tariff of fees; (d) the formation of a Pharmacy Board separate from the Medical Board; (e) removing the anomaly arising from the dispensing of dangerous drugs by Assistant Apothecaries in some government hospitals; (f) the "immediate separation" of the Course of Pharmacy from all other courses of study to raise the standards of the academic and practical training of pharmacy students; (g) reminding the pharmacist of his duties and responsibilities in the exercise of his profession and in his relations with medical practitioners; (h) safeguarding the premises of the pharmacy from "degenerating" into a "village bazaar" and from assuming the aspect of a "jumble sale" by stocking and selling goods unrelated to the pharmaceutical trade and thus lower the prestige of the profession.

On the scientific and historical side, the journal published articles on the origin and development of the British Pharmacopoeia; the story of the presscoating of medicaments; methods of sterilizing solutions for parenteral injections; and notes on the discoveries and uses of vaccination, antibiotics and vitamins.

Journal of the Malta Union of Pharmacists. 1967-71

The Malta Union of Pharmacists was formed in 1961, but it was not before 1967 that it issued the first number of its **Journal of the Malta Union of Pharmacists** with the "express intention of safeguarding the interests of the profession" as a Trade Union and "making the practice of the profession worthwhile and a decent business".

Its contents centred round the administrative reports of the committee; the statute of the Union (Vol. 2, 1970); the international contacts and relations with pharmaceutical bodies overseas; the holding in Malta of the First European Regional Meeting of the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association (May 1970); the frustrations experienced by the Union *vis-a-vis* the Pharmacy Board (founded in January 1968); and the reorganization of the Pharmacy Course of studies at the University leading to the new B.Pharm. degree.

The scientific and cultural aspects of pharmacy are well catered for in the six issues of the Journal that saw the light between October

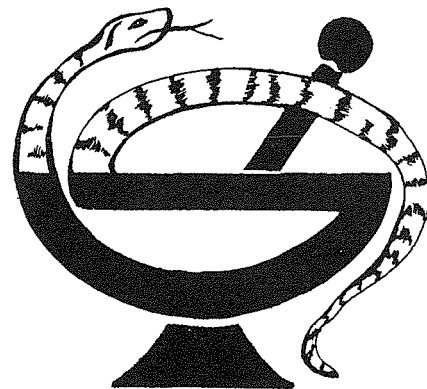
1967 and October 1971. The topics from various authors included articles on the zonation of animals in the intertidal regions; the Drugs Control Regulations (1967); the importation of drugs and equipment for the pharmacy of the Holy Infirmary of Valletta in the 18th century; the role of the Pharmacist in agriculture; the first recorded pharmacists in the Maltese Islands; the medicinal plants of Malta; the pharmacies of a century ago in Malta; the biochemistry of drugs; and the physiological availability of drug products.

The Pestle and Mortar. 1975-79

In June 1975, the students of the Course of Pharmacy founded the **Journal of the Malta Pharmaceutical Students Association — The Pestle and Mortar**. The aim of this journal was

journal of the MPSA - PHARMACEUTICAL STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

PESTLE & MORTAR



june 1979
vol 1 no. 4

'to provide discussion and elucidation in topics of interest in the pharmaceutical field' and to stress that "the pharmacy student has an identity of his own" separate from the medical and from the science student.

I am familiar with only the first four numbers of this publication which was issued at intermittent intervals. I have not seen any number beyond the fourth one that appeared in June 1979

The papers contained in this journal dealt with such topics as the adverse reactions of drugs; the role of the pharmacist in the drug manufacturing industry, in forensic toxicology and in the fight against drug addiction; the testing of new drugs for side effects before they are marketed; drug information; the possible dangers arising from drug administration during pregnancy; oral contraceptives; Maltese medicinal flora; and the annual reports of the Association.

The Pharmacist. 1981

After a gap of ten years the Chamber of Pharmacist-Trade Union revived the publication of **The Pharmacist** in 1981 with the main purpose of keeping "the Maltese pharmacist informed on the many developments and exciting innovations continually being made both within the pharmacy profession and in other related fields of science" and to "remind the pharmacist of his responsibilities and duties" towards his profession and the public especially with regard to dispensing and patient counselling.

That these aims have been adhered to during the six years of the journal's life is amply shown by the variety and high standard of the papers that have appeared in the sixteen numbers issued.

Features of practical value include:- problems arising from the fact that more than half of the pharmacies existing in 1981 did not have a full-time managing pharmacist attending during all hours that they were opened; the Medical Representative; the setting of standards for retail pharmacy practice; professional ethics; suggestion for a post-graduate course at the university leading to a doctorate in pharmacy; a new university course for pharmaceutical technologists intended for employment in industry; pharmacy education as a life time process; essential requirements for a first degree pharmacy students; the concept that ownership of pharmacies be restricted to pharmacists; and a memorandum by the Chamber on the problems fac-

ing pharmacy to-day (1987).

Sections on Union news; administrative reports of the Chamber; parliamentary issues involving pharmacy; notes on new therapeutic preparations, etc. form an integral part of every successive issue of the journal.

Papers on management of diseases, *materia medica*, therapy and pharmaceutical history deal with:- gallstones, sex transmitted illnesses, AIDS, hypertension, glaucoma, cholesterol accumulation, allergy; antibiotics, ingredients of cough mixtures, ophthalmic preparations, beta-blockers, drug therapy in the elderly, bioavailability of trimethoprim and of frusemide tablets; drug addiction, tolerance to morphine; generic names of drugs; Budapest Declaration on pharmaceuticals; skin reactions to drugs; forensic toxicology; sterilization of contact lenses; infant nutrition; computers in pharmacy; theriac, squill, aloe, chamomille, domestic fig; biographies of past pharmacists; outline history of pharmacy.

What of the future?

The various journals here reviewed hold a significant place in the annals of Maltese pharmacy. In spite of the short lives of the early ones and their intermittent appearances, these journals serve to record the facts and stages of the development of the academic, educational, research, ethical and business activities of the profession for the past sixty-seven years.

The Pharmacist, with its birth in 1981, has had the longest life of them all, thanks to the vigour and dedication of a relatively small band of pharmacists. Its continued existence and progress inevitably depends on the personal efforts of every individual pharmacist, the persistence of drive of the leading personalities in the profession and the cooperation of their colleagues. If all this is forthcoming the Chamber of Pharmacists-Trade Union will be in a position to meet the challenges ahead; and **The Pharmacist**, to record their successful resolution. **Ad multos annos!**

The Editorial Board would like to thank Dr. Paul Cassar for his very interesting and informative contribution. He is a renowned historian and he has on several occasions written articles on various historical aspects of pharmacy which have appeared from time to time in the local pharmaceutical publications.