



Pro-Rector Prof Muscat addressing the audience during the opening ceremony



Prof Muscat presenting the medal to Mr. Miggiani



Mr. Formosa holding the medal and certificate presented to him on the opening day of the symposium



Presentation of gifts to project supervisors

Pharmacy Students' Symposium 2008

This year the University Pharmacy Department's annual symposium was held for the first time at the Central Auditorium at Mater Dei Hospital. The event took place between the 3rd and 7th March 2008. A number of representatives from various companies in the healthcare industry, along with two veteran pharmacists, amongst others, contributed to this year's annual symposium. In his welcoming speech, Prof. Anthony Serracino Inglott thanked all those involved in the organisation of the symposium. He then introduced Pro-rector Prof. Richard Muscat who delivered a talk on the pharmacy profession and the two veteran pharmacists, Mr. Frank Miggiani and Mr. Francis Formosa.

Mr. Miggiani was accompanied by his daughter Anna and his son Mark who also addressed all those present. Before the speech, Mr Miggiani was presented a medal in recognition of service rendered to the pharmacy profession. The medal does not only symbolise an appreciation of the pharmacist but also serves as a recognition of the useful and important work he did for the profession.

Mr. Frank Miggiani graduated in 1940. He worked at St Luke's Hospital (SLH), ending his career at the medical stores where Dr Maurice Zarb Adami was one of his helpers. Mr. Miggiani used to visually inspect glass infusion bottles against light for particles; he put science and professional knowledge to work in the preparation of IV fluids. Since at that time no other quality control/assurance procedures were present, he had an immense individual responsibility; it was pure pharmacy practice. Apart from work, Miggiani was also very active in the Scouts Movement. Infact, he was a scout master in the Sliema district.

Mr Francis Formosa was also presented with a medal on the first day of the symposium. Mr. Formosa is a pharmacist who has over 60 years of experience and who is still willing to contribute to the profession. He worked in a highly prestigious pharmacy in Sliema where he assisted patients irrespective of locality. He was always ready to help young graduates who showed an interest in opening a pharmacy in Sliema.

Two of his grandsons, Dr. Mark Bencini and Mr. Ian Formosa together with Dr. Formosa (Mr. Formosa's son who is a consultant surgeon at Mater Dei Hospital) were present and gave a brief talk.

Following these presentations, two students, Karen Attard (2nd year) and Ritienne Fenech (4th year) student performed a musical piece just as they did before the presentation of medals. Next on the agenda were the first group of oral communications delivered by the 5th year students and the first day ended with a poster discussion session conducted by 4th year students.

In the following days, research related to pharmacotherapy, pharmacy administration, pharmaceutical care, treatment protocols, pharmacy information, pharmaceutical technology and industrial pharmacy, clinical analysis and medicinal chemistry, clinical trials, and regulatory affairs were presented. These studies were carried out by both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Various representatives from the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry also participated in the symposium. On Tuesday Paolo Piatesi from Aminochemicals, a synthetic factory manufacturing Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) gave a talk about his company. The next day, Prof. Claus Bachet, a guest speaker from the Schering-Plough Corporation gave a concise review on allergic rhinitis. Mr. Fava, a spokesperson of the

Chemimart Group of Companies also gave a brief description on Chemimart Ltd during that morning.

On the last day of the symposium, representatives from A.M. Mangion Ltd. presented a detailed profile of their company. All of the companies that contributed in the symposium were in search of recruiting promising 5th year students.

In the closing ceremony, Prof. A. Serracino Inglott thanked everyone who contributed to the success of the symposium and he explicitly thanked the Malta Pharmaceutical Students Association (MPSA) and Ms. Francesca Wirth, a pharmacist, who showed excellence in her work. Mariella Mercieca, a 5th year student, thanked everyone and encouraged students to join the students' organisation. Afterwards, there was the presentation of gifts to Prof. A. Serracino Inglott, Prof L. Azzopardi, Dr M. Zarb Adami, Dr C. Shoemake and Ms F. Wirth.

Finally a slideshow depicting the experiences of the 5th year students was shown. Like previous years, the gala dinner marked the ending of the symposium 2008. The gala dinner took place on Friday evening at the Monte Kristo Wine Vaults, Hal Farrug limits of Siggiewi; followed by an after party at the same venue.

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Mr. Formosa addressing all those present at the Pharmacy Symposium 2008



Norman's Pharmacy in Sliema, which he owned since 1950.



Colonial Pharmacy in Hamrun, where Mr. Formosa gave his service for nine months

Francis Formosa is a pharmacist with over 60 years of experience. Throughout the years he fought for the recognition of pharmacist's rights. During the last symposium, he was presented with a medal and a certificate in appreciation of his contribution to the profession.

Family

Francis Formosa is now 82 years old and resides in Sliema. He is a father of three, a granddad of eleven and a great grandfather of one.

Curriculum vitae

When Mr. Formosa was a student, students used to be recruited at university every three years. Formosa obtained his entry qualifications in 1943, but had to wait till 1945, to be able to read for the degree. During this period he used to work at the passport office and was then sent off to London.

In 1945 he was back in Malta and joined the university. At the time the course was not specifically targeted for pharmacists but there used to be a mixture of students with different objectives including students who wished to become doctors. In 1950 Mr. Formosa established Norman's Pharmacy in Sliema. He managed this pharmacy until his son, also a pharmacist, took over but he kept "lending a hand" in this pharmacy till January 2007, when he was 82 years old. He also offered his service for nine months at Colonial Pharmacy in Hamrun.

Mr. Formosa served as the secretary of the Malta Union of Pharmacists (MUP) for twenty years. At that time there were no funds so he worked really hard to restore the finances of the Union. He managed successfully by issuing journals. The journal yielded a lot of funds to the Union. Another factor that contributed to the Union's finances was a considerable amount of fund raising, the highlight of which was the bi-annual banquet. Mr. Formosa used to personally organize banquets for which around 400 people, including prominent personalities used to attend. The union recognised the importance of joining the FIP (International Pharmaceutical

Federation). Through the input of Mr. Formosa and through various contacts he had, including Dr T.D. Whittet, then chief pharmacist of Great Britain, the union managed to unite with the FIP. Mr. Formosa attended various congresses held by the Federation. During the interview he highlighted the invaluable help he got from the British Pharmaceutical Society (BPS). As a sign of gratitude, on his second visit to the BPS he presented a silver 'dghajsa' to the Society.

In time, the MUP and the Chamber of Pharmacists were amalgamated. The Chamber of Pharmacists was responsible for the academic matters while the MUP took care of the financial aspect. This new institution formed part of the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU). This union consisted of pharmacists, two pharmacy owners and members from the commerce sector amongst others. As a member of the CMTU, Mr. Formosa was sent to Oxford Plater College for a short course. Throughout his career he also attended several other conferences and seminars abroad.

A sad moment in Mr. Formosa's life was when he was constrained to resign from the above mentioned union due to a block vote against himself and Mr. Darmenia (the President of the Union). The reason for this decision was due to the fact that the pharmacy owners at that time wanted to follow the American system in that they sought after the liberalisation of the pharmacies. They wanted to sell any type of products to increase their sales. Both Mr. Formosa and Mr. Darmenia were completely against this proposal thus leading to the above mentioned block vote.

Pharmacist's job at the time

Back in the 50's pharmacists were requested to attend the pharmacy only once a week to sign the registers. In this way the pharmacist took the responsibility of all the tasks that were performed during the entire week at the pharmacy.

All the work used to be carried out by a compounder or a salesgirl. The problem was two-fold, one being the pharmacist had to assume the responsibility of every action the salesgirl or the compounder may have done during the week and secondly the pharmacist was paid a meagre wage of roughly Lm20 (€46.58) per month.

Achievement attained by Mr. Formosa through the union

An example of an "adverse effect" resulting from the absence of a qualified pharmacist in every pharmacy was the dispensing of veterinary Terramycin to paediatric patients. The importance of having a pharmacist in attendance in every pharmacy was emphasised. Anyone who was found of breaching this rule was obliged to close down. This led to an increase in demand for pharmacists, subsequently the salary of the pharmacist rose from Lm20 (€46.58) per month to Lm100 (€232.92). This was by all means an outstanding achievement for the union.

His views and suggestions to the profession.

Mr. Formosa affirmed that if he was to be reborn he would definitely choose the same profession; but he would not go to community practice because he believes that the working hours are not convenient. He would rather go the research area; he is more interested in laboratory work. Mr. Formosa expressed his satisfaction regarding the introduction of the pharmacy of your choice scheme. He insisted that the pharmacist should be inspected by another pharmacist. He stated that he found it very frustrating and undignified to be inspected by a person outside the profession who has neither the expertise nor the skills required in the world of pharmacy.

The research spot

In the first issue of the newsletter, a section is dedicated to the previous and current research that is being done by pharmacy students about the history of pharmacy. History is of particular significance since it is a valuable assistant in the perception of the present. Moreover, history has always been, and still is, the teacher of life.

The pharmacy department realised the importance of this topic and consequently various projects were assigned to students throughout the years.

In 1987, Pullicino carried out a project about the history of pharmacy in Malta, entitled 'A history of post-war pharmacy in Malta'. The methodology used included an extensive literature review as well as a personal communication with a chief pharmacist at the time. The project primarily focused on the history of medicinal products and Pullicino gave particular importance to certain topics including diabetes mellitus, vaccines, anaesthesia, antibiotics and the pharmacy course teaching because she believed that these were the main areas which influenced the pharmacy profession. A shortcoming of this project is that Pullicino failed to give an indication of the number of pharmacies and pharmacists present throughout the years.

In 1995, Borg carried out a project entitled 'The History of Pharmacy in Malta (1450-1995)'. Literature review and oral interviews were the two research methods used. Interviews were carried out with seven community pharmacists who had commenced their practice in the 1930s. The following results are of particular interest:

- From 1450 to 1979 there was an increase of 127 community pharmacies in the Maltese Islands
- From 1861 to 1995, the population per pharmacist ratio decreased by 77%
- From 1676 there was a shift in the subjects studied in the first year of the pharmacy course.

Borg remarked that since 1450 Malta enjoyed one of the most advanced systems.

Malta was a step ahead compared to other European countries as regards to codes of behaviour; rules regarding the importation of drugs; and constant surveillance.

'History of pharmacy in Malta: post-war' is the project carried out in 2004 by Zammit Marmara. The aim of the study was to present a general survey of the history of pharmacy in Malta from 1950 up to the day during which the study took place. The main outcome measures covered topics such as the increase in pharmacist population and in the number of pharmacies; gender differences; pharmacists' specialisations; economic trends and the diabetes mortality rate.

Zammit Marmara adopted the same research tools as Borg. The information obtained from literature review was validated. Semi-formal open-ended interviews were distributed to previously identified pharmacists with the intention of acquiring information on education, pharmaceutical care and practice, economic trends, social aspects and the perception of people in general. The following results were reported:

- From 1948 to 2003 there was an increase of 708 pharmacists
- In 1979 the pharmacy profession increased popularity with the female gender
- From 1990 to 2002 there was an increase of €5823.03 (Lm2,500) per annum in the remuneration of the pharmacist
- From 1946 to 2003 there was an increase of 113 pharmacies
- From 1955 to 2002 there was an increase of 97 pharmacists employed with the government.

● The introduction of insulin in 1923 was not shown to be successful so a Diabetes Clinic was opened in 1938 to deal better with the situation.

● There was also a restructuring in the pharmacy course from one focusing on Botany to one emphasising analytical chemistry, pharmaceuticals and pharmacy practice.

Zammit Marmara concluded that there was a shift in the role of the pharmacist, from a product-oriented role to a patient oriented approach.

Currently, two 3rd year students, Gerard Abela and Elaine Seychell are carrying out studies related to the history of pharmacy. Gerard Abela is assigned the project entitled "History of pharmacy". He is analysing the general prescribing trends in Malta commencing from the mid 1940's. The collection of data is being done by examining the Daily Sales Register of a community pharmacy. Apart from giving an indication of the prescribing trends at that time, this project will also highlight the time at which newer agents were launched. To date Abela studied the registers for the years 1945 and 1946. "Feasibility study of setting up a museum related to the healthcare professions" is the project Elaine Seychell is undertaking to partially fulfill the requirements of the pharmacy course. Seychell is seeking individuals who have in their possession historical items related to the healthcare profession. These individuals will be given a questionnaire to complete. Furthermore they will be encouraged to make available any items they possess for an exhibition which will be held in the Foyer of the Medical School at Mater Dei Hospital. All items collected are being catalogued and listed in an inventory. Throughout the display, questionnaires will be distributed so as to obtain feedback. The aim of the display is to induce a sense of appreciation towards the history of medicine and of pharmacy.



The history of pharmacy

"History is not the past, but a map of the past drawn from a particular point of view to be useful to the modern traveler"
~Henry Glassie"

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