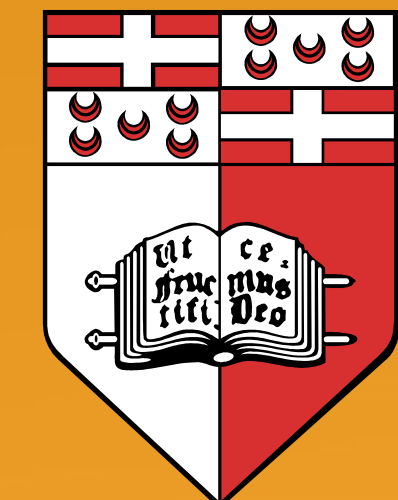
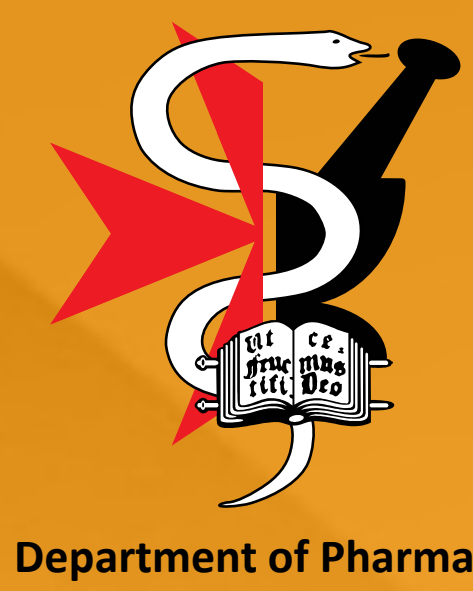


# Setting Up a Helpline for Pharmacy Services

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## INTRODUCTION

Pharmacy helplines providing pharmacy services over the phone could be useful to consumers seeking advice when they cannot access pharmacists physically or because their request is after-hours. At the touch of a button, the services of a pharmacist are instantly available to the consumer. Callers have the advantage of total privacy and the exclusivity of one-on-one attention.

## AIMS

- To set up a pilot helpline for pharmacy services.
- To examine the logistics required to establish the service.
- To determine the costs for the Pharmacy Helpline service.

## METHOD

- Sponsorship was sourced and a suitable location was established as the helpline call centre, with a pharmacist recruited as the helpline operator.
- All local telephony service providers were contacted and briefed on the project and negotiations were undertaken until an agreement was reached with a service provider to host the helpline.
- The helpline was set up in accordance with Good Telephony Guidelines and regulations stipulated by the Malta Communications Authority.



## RESULTS



- The costs incurred to set up the helpline amounted to €10.99 to cover the service provider charge and line rental. Calls to the Helpline cost the consumer a one time charge of €1 and the normal telephony rates to a fixed line. Location, equipment and the pharmacist's salary are provided by the sponsor.
- The helpline has been activated and challenged by means of 5 random telephone calls. The pharmacist provided advice to all the consumers. The connection was successful.
- Services provided by the Helpline include: Patient Advice, Drug Interactions Reporting, Medicine Information, Patient Referral and Adverse Drug Reactions Reporting.

## CONCLUSION

The Helpline is revolutionary, as for the first time ever, pharmacists are being remunerated for essential services they provide. The next step is to publicise the service and have consumers become aware of this service. Through increased exposure and good publicity the Helpline has the potential to expand the range of services offered and even recruit further health professionals to its ranks.