



### Pharmacy Students' Symposium 2009

The Annual Pharmacy Students Symposium remains a very significant activity of the Pharmacy Department for the past academic year. This year's Pharmacy Symposium was held at the Institute of Healthcare's central auditorium, Mater Dei Hospital (MDH) between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March. Highly distinguished guests including the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Hon. Joe Cassar and the Minister for Social Policy, Hon. John Dalli contributed to this year's annual symposium.



Prof. Lilian Azzopardi addressing the audience during the opening ceremony.

Final year Pharmacy students delivered the results of their research projects via oral communication sessions. Fourth, third and second year students reported their work-in-progress through poster discussion sessions and poster presentations. The areas tackled include pharmacotherapy and treatment protocols, pharmaceutical care and point-of-care testing, pharmacy information, pharmacy administration, regulatory affairs, industrial pharmacy, as well as clinical and pharmaceutical analysis. The six final year M.Sc. students presented their research work on three main areas of pharmacy including clinical pharmacy, pharmacoconomics and industrial pharmacy.

In her welcoming speech Prof. Lilian Azzopardi, new Head of Pharmacy Department thanked predecessor Prof. Anthony Serracino Inglott for his useful contributions to the Pharmacy profession and asserted his new role as the coordinator of the project module. Prof. Azzopardi invited Hon. Joe Cassar, to deliver his speech on the evolving roles of pharmacy.



Hon. Dr. Joe Cassar addressing the audience on the first day of the symposium.

*"I am pleased to note that my persistent urging of the leaders in pharmacy is leading to a broader collaboration between the Pharmacy Department at Mater Dei Hospital and the Department of Pharmacy of the University. In this way, the developmental route map of a practitioner towards assuring high quality performance can be achieved through a career structure approach"*

-Hon. Dr. Joe Cassar  
9/3/09

The chancellor of the University of Malta, Prof. John Rizzo Naudi gave a tribute to Prof. Anthony Serracino Inglott, Prof. Lilian M. Azzopardi and Dr. Maurice Zarb Adami for their vision and energy in the Pharmacy department that resulted in so many high standard graduates.

In his speech, the Dean of the faculty of Medicine & Surgery, Professor Godfrey Laferla stated that the Department of Pharmacy is one of the pillars of the Faculty of Medicine & Surgery and that sterling work is being carried out in different areas of pharmacy. According to pro-rector Prof. Richard Muscat such research should be brought to the attention of the public and policymakers so that it can assist them in making a more rational and sustainable use of medicines and of pharmacy services.



*"The Annual Pharmacy Symposium, which is organised by the Department of Pharmacy, is one of the activities that forms an integral part of the educational process. The symposium brings together all pharmacy students and this is an opportunity for networking within the profession. Students practice their skills in dissemination of results from projects through the preparation of abstracts, poster and oral presentations."*

-Hon. Mr. John Dalli  
11/3/09

The next distinguished guest was the Hon. John Dalli who delivered a talk on Wednesday about the ever-increasing challenges facing the pharmacy profession. Hon. Dalli emphasised the importance of pharmacoconomics mentioning as a case in point, the Pharmacy of Your Choice (POYC) system. He stated that the whole scheme is to be reevaluated in an exercise that will involve all the stakeholders, including the Pharmacy Department.

Hon. Mr. John Dalli during his speech on Wednesday the 11th March 2009.

On Thursday, two pharmacists from MDH, Ms. Josette Sciberras and Mr. Mark L. Zammit gave an overview of the career of a hospital pharmacist. Afterwards, students and all those present were invited for a tour around the Pharmacy department at MDH to actually see and understand better the role of the pharmacist in this scenario.

During the last day of the symposium Prof. Anthony Serracino Inglott expressed his satisfaction and pride at the high level of the students' work. He took the opportunity to thank all those who contributed in helping the students during the course of their research. He then introduced Prof. Sam Salek from Cardiff University who has been in a long standing collaboration with the Pharmacy department in joint research programmes. Prof. Salek in his brief comment stated how much the pharmacy symposium has grown over the years and congratulated the students for their achievement in presenting their work in a professional manner. To conclude this year's symposium, a gala dinner was held on Friday evening at the Monte Kristo Wine Vaults, Hal Farrug, which was followed by a party at the same venue.

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## 7th World Meeting on Pharmaceutics, Biopharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology

8th-11th March 2010

Valletta, Malta



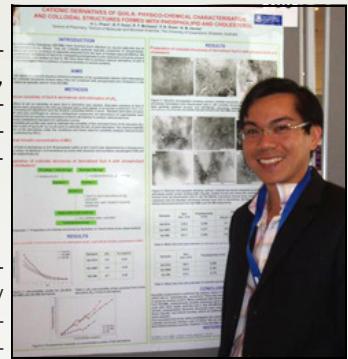
### Introduction

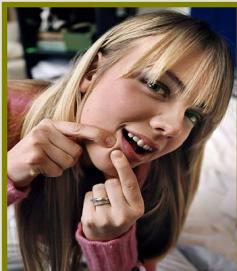
The World Meeting on Pharmaceutics, Biopharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology is a biennial event that has gained an ever increasing importance among pharmaceutical experts. Numerous oral sessions and poster presentations offer new and world-renowned scientists from all over the world the opportunity to present their work, be abreast with the latest scientific findings and share their experience with colleagues on a wide range of topics related to Pharmaceutics, Biopharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology.

### Overview

The 7th edition of the cited meeting will be held next year between the 8th and 11th March at the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta, Malta. An international exhibition for R&D (Research & Development), ResearchPharm will accompany the meeting wherein named contract manufacturers will be invited to showcase their company and services to a truly international and highly specialized audience. State-of-the-art laboratory equipment, excipients and latest information on various scientific and technical services will be presented during this exhibition.

The meeting will focus on industry related topics with the main objective being that of bridging academic research and industrial applications. Some of the topics that will be discussed include: advanced drug delivery systems; site-specific delivery and targeting; parenteral delivery; biomaterials; biocompatibility; polymers; tissue engineering; bioavailability and absorption enhancement; cellular drug transport and in-vitro/in-vivo correlations.





## The research spot- Acne

Acne vulgaris, commonly known as acne is an inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin. The condition generally starts in adolescence and resolves by mid-twenties. Nevertheless, the condition may also affect neonates, prepubescent children and adults.

Several studies analysing the condition have been carried out by students reading for a Bachelor in Pharmacy. The main points of their research are briefly mentioned below.



### "A survey of acne vulgaris and its topical treatment"- Godwin Ellul 1979

In his study, Ellul outlined the clinical features, the causes of acne, the antibiotics used in systemic therapy and the factors that might cause or influence the disease. In addition, he discussed the properties, presentation, application, contra-indications and warnings as well as statistical data and results of clinical trials of some acne preparations. After this evaluation, the researcher formulated a new topical treatment and this was applied effectively on a volunteer.

### "Management of acne with special reference to isotretinoin"- Robert Paul Spiteri 1994

The study was divided into three sections. The first section aimed at describing the somatopsychic impact of 28 acne patients at Sir Paul Boffa Hospital while the other two sections attempted to determine the prescribing patterns and dispensing procedures for isotretinoin. In his study, Spiteri found that patients perceived acne as having a number of negative consequences that impinged on their self-perception and in their relationships with other people. These consisted of embarrassment (57%), depression or anxiety (36%), inferiority (25%) and social inhibition (39%).

Focusing on the then prescribing trends, dermatologists used to prescribe the oral retinoid when acne failed to respond to adequate antimicrobial therapy. This is because of the teratogenic properties associated with oral retinoids. After assessing the dispensing procedures for isotretinoin it was confirmed that the pharmacists needed further information on the management of acne patients undergoing oral isotretinoin therapy and Spiteri issued an information booklet on this type of therapy.

### "Acne management in community practice"- Alexia Portughese 1998

The aim of the study was to gain epidemiological knowledge about acne in community practice from a sample consisting of 120 acne patients chosen from eight pharmacies around Malta. The patients interviewed mentioned genetic factors, sunlight, stress, chocolates, fried foods and menstruation as being the major triggering factors of acne.

After three months of treatment the patients were interviewed again to determine the degree of improvement in their condition, the level of compliance and the possible reasons for lack of compliance. The most common reasons given for lack of compliance to treatment included side-effects from medications, lack of visible improvement, laziness and forgetfulness. Moreover, the degree of improvement was found to be dependent upon the medications used and on the level of patient compliance. In all cases, the degree of improvement increased as the levels of compliance improved. An outstanding improvement was seen in 4 of the 5 patients being treated with hormonal therapies, 11 of 21 patients taking systemic antibiotics and 3 of the 8 patients treated with systemic retinoids.

When assessing the Maltese pharmacists' knowledge on the evaluation of acne and the proper management of the condition, Portughese concluded that most of the pharmacists have adequate evaluation skills regarding acne but their knowledge on the management of this condition is somehow limited. In order to rectify and assist the pharmacists in their medication treatment of acne, Portughese compiled a glossary of acne products available at a particular community pharmacy.

### "Quality of life and acne management"- Vibeke Ellul Sullivan 2006

Ellul Sullivan attempted to determine how the quality of life (QoL) of acne patients is affected before and after treatment. Through the study it was established that 86% of the sampled patients (n=44) showed at least some degree of improvement in the QoL after three months of treatment and that acne affected the mental state much more than the physical health. Females showed more improvement than males while adults showed more improvement than adolescents. It is important to note that improvement in QoL is dependent upon various factors including successful treatment, the severity of acne being treated, side effects of treatment and scarring.



*"I had pimples so badly it used to make me so shy. I used not to look at myself."*

Michael Jackson  
(1958-2009)  
American musician

#### References:

Ellul G. A survey of acne vulgaris and its topical treatment [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 1979.

Spiteri RP. Management of acne with special reference to isotretinoin [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 1994.

Portughese A. Acne management in community practice [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 1998.

Ellul Sullivan V. Quality of life and acne management [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 2006.

The projects referred to in this newsletter are carried out under the supervision of members of the academic staff of the Department of Pharmacy with the collaboration of other academic staff from various faculties and institutes in the University including other departments in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery. The Department of Pharmacy is fortunate to have such an expert collaboration from so many academics and recognises such distinguished contributions.

- **Mailing Address:** Department of Pharmacy, University of Malta, Msida MSD 2080, Malta.
- **E-mail address:** phcy@um.edu.mt
- **Tel:** +356 21343764/5
- **Fax:** +356 21340427
- **Head of Department:** Prof. L.M. Azzopardi
- [lilian.m.azzopardi@um.edu.mt](mailto:lilian.m.azzopardi@um.edu.mt)
- **Editor:** Antine Vella
- [avvel0019@um.edu.mt](mailto:avvel0019@um.edu.mt)
- **Web:** <http://www.um.edu.mt/ms/pharmacy>



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