



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

The Pharmacy Department Review

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At the start of a new academic year 2009/10

Over the years pharmacy studies have attracted a number of students. This year was no exception. Around 50 students enrolled as first year students. Such a large number of students points to the appeal and attractiveness of the course and the profession. Last June 28 students finished their pharmacy studies. Along with these there were six post graduate students who have completed their studies in Master of Science in Pharmacy. Congratulations to the new MSc Pharmacy students: Ian Baldacchino, Kristen Buhagiar, Andrew Corrieri, Clifton Curmi, Pierre Fava and Elaine Vella .



New Pharmacy Department Website

This academic year kicked off with a new Pharmacy Department's website. The website which forms part of an integrated network of departments and institutes is now available on <http://www.um.edu.mt/ms/pharmacy>. In this website one can find a variety of sections including the history of the Pharmacy Department, information about: staff, research, coursework, activities, student mobility, resources and timetables and notices which are continuously updated for the students' convenience.

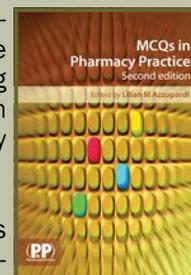


A new book by Prof. Lilian M. Azzopardi- MCQs in Pharmacy Practice Second edition

Following the success of the previous books on Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) in Pharmacy Practice and Clinical Pharmacy, Prof. Azzopardi, the editor of the books: MCQs in Pharmacy Practice, MCQs in Clinical Pharmacy and Further MCQs in Pharmacy Practice has recently published the fourth book in this series entitled *MCQs in Pharmacy Practice Second edition*.

This book has received very positive comments from both foreign and local experts. These include Prof. Anderson from the University of Nottingham who stated that this book provides the reader with a variety of practice MCQs that can be used to assess essential pharmacy practice knowledge in a number of areas, including drug action, uses, clinical pharmacology, adverse effects, pharmaceutical care, counselling points, product selection and pharmaceutical calculations. She also stated that this book will be a very useful text both for pharmacy preregistration examinations candidates and for practising pharmacists.

Professor Jennifer Marriot from Monash University, Australia expects the book to follow the success of its predecessors. According to her 'the questions in *MCQs in Pharmacy Practice 2nd edn* are of an excellent standard and format, variety and structure that make it an essential resource for the pharmacy profession'.



Calendar of events

19 December- 3 January	Christmas Recess
8-12 March	7th World Meeting on Pharmaceutics, Biopharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology
22-26 March	Pharmacy Symposium
29 March- 11 April	Easter Recess
31 May- 26 June	Examinations

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This newsletter is published as part of an undergraduate project carried out by Antine Vella under the supervision of Professor Anthony Serracino Inglott.
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Pharmacy Students and their comments about the new academic year

This is my final year reading Pharmacy after four interesting though very hardworking years. This year I am practising at a local community pharmacy and I think it is a very positive experience as I am developing my knowledge in pharmacy as well as confirming my ability to become a professional pharmacist. Of course, initially this task may look a bit daunting, given the large amount of work I know I have in store; what with attending the pharmacy full-time, finishing the thesis, preparing for the symposium, studying, and topping it all with the finals in June. However, right now I'm full of enthusiasm and wish for this year to be a great success.



Glorianne Camilleri
5th year



Michelle Cole
4th year

Hoorah! I am now in year 4. I have been eagerly looking forward to commence this university year. One of the main reasons is that during this semester all Pharmacy 4th year students have been given a "placement" which in my case is clinical. During the placement I am attending daily at Mater Dei Hospital, following Consultants, Doctors and Clinical Pharmacists in Diabetes on their ward rounds, observing how each and every case is treated in a sensitive way. The treatment for each patient is reviewed continuously so as to have a positive outcome. This is done through the right choice of the suitable drug, given at the right dose, dosage form and at the right time. Hence in this scenario I have appreciated and realised more the importance of the clinical pharmacist. I am also attending at the outpatients Department of the Diabetes Clinic from where I can realise the importance of emphasising the correct administration of drugs and the advice given to the patient continuously. There is something else I am looking forward to this year -The Pharmacy Symposium; this is held annually. Besides the preparation of the poster this year we have to prepare a brief overview of the thesis to be presented as an oral presentation in front of a big audience. Mentioning the thesis, I am also doing my best to work on it, thus obtaining sufficient results from the evaluation being done. Finally I wish and hope that the year ends well by having good results in the upcoming final exams.

A breath of fresh air... we're almost half way through. Stepping into class for my first lecture this year made me feel quite at ease and satisfied to be back with my classmates but as the week came to an end I realised what a busy year we have ahead of us. What with new subjects, assignments, ward rounds, placements and poster presentations it is sure to be a hectic but colourful year. I will especially be looking forward to the hands on experience we will be having in the clinical or industrial setting next semester as I consider such practical sessions to be the place where we can fully understand what we have learnt in theory. Some of us are already thinking about placements abroad in the fourth year while others would rather focus on their thesis projects. In any case, I'm sure my friends would agree that we've got quite a handful to cope with. The road ahead may seem long and uncertain at first glance but I suggest we take one step at a time and have a break every now and then to appreciate the view.



Stephanie Bezzina
3rd year



Danika Agius Decelis
2nd year

Up till now the course was quite as I expected, and I have no regrets in choosing pharmacy as my career. First year covered a wide range of different aspects of pharmacy. I am looking forward to this academic year, which so far was quite intensive with regards to pharmacological areas. Knowing that our dissertation titles will soon be given, I anticipate that we have busy years ahead of us.

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The research spot- GDP



Good Distribution Practice (GDP) refers to the guidelines for the proper distribution of medicinal products for human use. Council Directive 2001/83/EC imposes obligations on both regulator and distributor to ensure proper control over the entire chain of distribution of medicinal products, from their manufacture or importation into the community to the supply to the public. Figure 1 illustrates the final point in the Pharmaceutical Supply Chain, where the pharmacist dispenses the medication to the patient.

Fig.1 The dispensing pharmacist

The subject was tackled in a number of studies within the Pharmacy Department. During the past four years, five students embarked on separate projects related to GDP. Clarissa De Marco in 2005 carried out a study entitled 'The Pharmacist's Role in Good Distribution Practice and Wholesale Dealing Activities - The Setting up of a Quality System'. In her study, De Marco sought to set up a Quality Management System (QMS) for a local wholesaler. Moreover she provided an organisational structure where she listed and explained the responsibilities and procedures for implementing quality management within her context of research.

In 2006 Oliver Scicluna enlarged on the concept of QMS in his study on *Protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the importation and distribution of pharmaceuticals*. The project included the formulation, implementation and validation of SOPs according to GDP guidelines. As part of his research, Scicluna translated an SOP into Maltese which after validation proved to be a useful tool for the increased readability, understanding and usage of SOPs for certain grades.

Another student was Ariane Darmanin who in 2008 completed the study entitled 'The pharmacist and Good Distributon Practice'. The study attempted to unravel the steps involved in the distribution of medicinal products to create a Controlled Drug Database. Darmanin analysed the history of distribution and examined regulations in relation to the distribution in Malta. In addition, a traceability study was conducted on an ACE (Angiotensin Converting Enzyme) inhibitor, a dangerous drug and a vaccine, with their respective agents or wholesalers.



Noyes Brothers & Cutler, a wholesale drug company in 1870

At present, Vanessa Azzopardi, a fifth year pharmacy student is undertaking the project entitled '*GDP: The example of a wholesaler*'. The study attempts to review and implement GDP using Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Templates of SOPs are being compiled in a booklet so as to serve as a guide for wholesalers to ensure product safety, quality and efficacy.

A third year pharmacy student, Suzanne Buttigieg is looking at Quality improvements in GDP. Buttigieg will review the process involved in the distribution of medicines to identify any possible improvements to the system. Trials of this updated system are expected to be performed and evaluated.

These studies are shedding light on the various facets of GDP with the hope that this will influence various stakeholders like policymakers, pharmaceutical companies and pharmacists.

References:

De Marco C. The pharmacist's role in good distribution practice and wholesale dealing activities - the setting up of a quality system [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 2005.

Scicluna O. Protocols and standard operating procedures for the importation and distribution of pharmaceuticals [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 2006.

Darmanin A. The pharmacist and good distribution practice [dissertation]. Msida (Malta): University of Malta.; 2008.

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.

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¹ - Schering Plough. Summary of product characteristics.

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