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INTRODUCTION

The Doctorate in Pharmacy postgraduate course leads to a level 8 degree and is offered by the Department of Pharmacy of the University of Malta in collaboration with the College of Pharmacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, USA. This course is unique in that it combines the development and application of advanced clinical pharmacy skills with contextual research.

AIM

To review the Doctorate in Pharmacy course which has been offered since October 2014.

METHOD

The course is spread over three years and consists of three components:

- Didactic part – composed of online lectures, live tutorials and patient-case-based sessions covered over 28 weeks
- Rotations – involving five periods of practice rotations in pharmacy settings, including direct patient care in hospitals, community pharmacy, distribution of medicines, regulatory affairs, manufacturing industry and quality control covering 26 weeks
- Research – consisting of an applied research dissertation which is completed over 28 weeks

The taught elements integrate learning experience with the assessment and contextualization in the professional life.

During the practice-based teaching, students have the opportunity to discuss and apply the knowledge to real-case scenarios with the guidance of experienced specialists.

Clinical Experience is provided through clinical rotations based in different pharmacy settings.

The *Research component* introduces the student to conduct a research project which includes literature analysis, fieldwork and data interpretation.

RESULTS

- To date, 43 students from 9 countries namely Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Libya, Malta, Spain and Uganda are enrolled in this programme.
- The didactic part focuses on advanced pharmacotherapy, principles of pharmacoeconomics, drug information and statistical analysis and health systems in Europe and the USA.
- The dissertation topics approached by students cover areas of interest to the student and the faculty and reflect innovative practices and clinical services (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Examples of dissertation topics approached by the first cohort of students (n=17)

CONCLUSION

The Doctorate in Pharmacy course is an opportunity for pharmacists to develop advanced skills in pharmacotherapy and patient management, in the assessment of innovative therapies and in leadership. It empowers pharmacists practising in professional areas to assume leadership roles that will drive policies and developments in clinical practice and to provide services that draw on scientific, evidence-based research.