

# The evolution of our medical school

The University of Malta Medical School has a long history dating back to the foundation of the School of Anatomy and Surgery in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Numerous publications give testimony to the long line of illustrious graduates and faculty members who have contributed to the establishment and continuing expansion of this School.

In past centuries, the Medical School has had to face threats imposed by war, political upheaval and financial constraints. The present century is certainly no exception. A year ago the fate of the Medical School was uncertain following problems with the allocation of space for the administrative offices of the Medical School within the new University teaching hospital, Mater Dei, issues that have since been rectified. Healthcare professionals and students look forward to the opportunity of working and learning in this state of the art facility, which is the embodiment of a firm resolve and dedication to providing optimal healthcare and education in the field of medicine and of healthcare in general. The proximity to the main campus of the University of Malta will facilitate collaboration with fellow academics in a number of faculties, institutes and departments at the University of Malta.

The Medical School is totally committed to maintaining and further developing medical education in Malta through expansion locally and on an international level. This can be seen by the increasing number of courses, both undergraduate and indeed postgraduate, that the Medical School co-ordinates and supports. These range from training in the traditional basic and clinical sciences as well as in healthcare related fields. Quality assurance is ensured through both internal and external auditing processes and collaboration with networks and centres of excellence in Europe. Collaboration with individual institutions through contacts established by individuals or departments are now a regular occurrence with bilateral exchange of staff and students. Interaction with Colleges and various bodies responsible for postgraduate training further enrich our medical education program. Since 2005, the Medical School has been a member of MEDINE, Medical Education in Europe, a network of excellence supported by the European Union. This network has the task of establishing and maintaining standards in medical education across the breadth of Europe, of assessing and developing medical curricula and critically analysing assessment methods. The establishment of core competences that need to be passed on to European medical graduates and the measurement of outcomes are the focus of different task forces. The use of TUNING methodology as applied to medical

education is the remit of another task force as is the role of research both in medical education itself as well as in the basic and clinical sciences. The University of Malta Medical School looks forward to future collaboration in the above areas both within the network itself as well as with individual institutions abroad.

The physical move to the new premises is therefore but one aspect of the expanding role of the Medical School locally and internationally. It is a School committed to making the teaching hospital a centre of excellence in healthcare and medical education. To this end, the administrative infrastructure and offices of the Medical School will have the task of ensuring adequate allocation of teaching and research space. The faculty of the Medical School are in a unique position to effect change and promote development in their dual roles as clinicians and educators.

Professor R Ellul Micallef, on the occasion of his retirement as Rector of the University, recently highlighted the conclusions of the independent external audit report carried out in 2005. The University and the Medical School were praised for their achievements despite constraints imposed by lack of human and financial resources. Professor J Camilleri, the new Rector, in his vision statement provided us with an inspiring insight into what he believes the University and the Medical School can and should strive to achieve in future. In keeping with the recommendations of the external auditors, the Medical School has taken steps to set up a Medical Education and Research Unit with the task of co-ordinating and running the relevant programmes and efforts in the field of Medical Education. An injection of human resources and appropriate budgeting is essential to furthering these developments, as one cannot realistically expect external funding alone to cover all these efforts and attain targets set.

The quality of a healthcare institution is measured not solely by its state of the art facilities but also by the quality of its faculty, its graduates and its educational and research programmes. Mater Dei, as **THE** teaching hospital of the University of Malta Medical School, should provide us with the possibility to maintain the current high standards in medical education, to further expand and improve the breadth and quality of health education and research to the benefit of our country and our University staff. This then translates effortlessly into state of the art healthcare for our patients.

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Editor