

Publish or perish?

This issue of the Malta Medical Journal contains a historical perspective on medical publications in Malta over the years and it is a tribute to the medical community that over the last one hundred and seventy years, dedicated members of that profession have published articles of relevance to the practice of medicine in the Maltese Islands. The aim has been to highlight problems particular to the epidemiology, pathophysiology and management of disease endemic in Malta.

In a country with a population of just over 400,000, the survival of such publications has depended on a number of different factors – infrastructural, financial, and by the very nature of their content, relatively limited circulation with the resultant implications for indexing and the acquisition of an impact factor. Ultimately until recently the limited resources available to local researchers wishing to address specific hypotheses with the aim of improving patient centred medical care also impacted on the volume of scientific activity going on.

In this issue, there are articles related to chronic non communicable disease which are having a significant impact on patient morbidity and mortality and the healthcare budget namely chronic respiratory problems and dementia. The provision of cost effective healthcare with rehabilitation and devolvment of patient care to the community represent major public health challenges at present and the identification of lacunae in service provision is the initial step in the development of national health strategies in chronic non-communicable

diseases such as these two. The implementation of such strategies mandates the use of auditing and of analysis re local concordance with international established standards of health care. Genetic, cultural and health service structures differ in individual countries and in specific regions in individual countries. Hence the need to ensure that proposed measures and treatments are appropriate to the specific population in this case the Maltese population.

Subsequent to the establishment of postgraduate training programs, young trainees are now keen to research and publish and the Faculty of Medicine now has seen a significant increase in the number of students undertaking Masters and Doctoral studies. It is now possible to apply for research funds and a number of courses are available that focus on grantsmanship, research, statistics and scientific writing. The Malta Medical Journal which is published online and also in hard copy, provides such young researchers with a forum to publish their observations, under the supervision and with the help of their more senior colleagues.

This increase in research activity and publication will hopefully continue to increase over the coming years reflecting the local medical community's healthy constructive critical attitude to work published in the international medical community and its relevance to the practice of medicine in Malta.

Josanne Vassallo
Editor