

ALLIED HEALTH CARE SERVICES NEWSLETTER

Welcome to another issue of the Allied Health Newsletter. In this issue there is a new section where we meet one of our Professional Leads. Whilst thanking all colleagues who have sent articles and information, all professionals are encouraged to contribute in further editions. We wish you all a great summer and remind everybody to take precautions in the sun!



Higher Diploma in Physiological Measurement Graduation



In 2016, MCAST together with the Directorate of Allied Health Services embarked on this training initiative to upgrade the training of ECG technicians within their service remit in respiratory, cardiac, neurophysiology specialized areas. On Thursday 26 April 2018, MCAST celebrated the graduation of 25 students who successfully completed the Higher Diploma in Physiological Measurement (Level 5). The ceremony took place at MCAST Main Hall, Main Campus.

Movement & Physical Activity Programme for Adult Clients with Down Syndrome

The Physiotherapy Department at primary health care in collaboration with the Adult Down Syndrome clinic initiated an exercise programme for adult clients with Down syndrome and their carers. The Movement and Physical Activity programme aims to enhance strength, balance and cardiovascular health, maintaining independence and empowering the person to be more active. The programme was launched in March to coincide with Down syndrome day, and will be held on a monthly basis. Participants were assessed for eligibility prior to the programme. There were an encouraging number of attendants from the Adult Down syndrome group.



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Let's Meet...Mr. Peter Gatt

...What is the role of the Clinical Perfusionist?

The perfusionist is responsible of providing extracorporeal circulatory support to patients undergoing particular surgical and/or medical interventions. Traditionally, the perfusionist has been associated with open heart surgery, where both the



heart and the lungs have been arrested, whereby the patient's circulation is connected to the heart lung machine (HLM) which supports the patient's circulation and provides gas exchange during the period of the operation. By means of

various monitoring equipment and point-of-care analytical instruments the perfusionist continuously assesses the patient's physiological parameters, taking the necessary corrective actions to adjust thus ensure patient safety throughout CPB.

...What are the challenges the profession faces?

For the past 2 decades, the perfusion profession has been described by many as a dying profession. This was mainly due to changes in cardiac surgical techniques which did not require the support of the HLM, and hence the perfusionist. Over time, these changes were shown to have failed the desired outcomes of surgery, a sigh of relief to the perfusion world. Nowadays, the challenge is coming from interventional cardiology, whereby, due to advances in this clinical field, less patients are being referred for open-heart surgery. This has decreased the number of cardiac cases, however increased the complexity of open heart surgery.

In view of the above, the challenge to the global perfusion profession is on how to tap into other medical/surgical fields and keep the profession going. With advances in technology, extracorporeal circulatory support has been extended to other medical fields, such as in intensive care, cardiology, oncology and trauma. Consequently the perfusionist has emerged from the operating theatre settings and in some countries even out of hospital to provide such support.

...What is the greatest success for your profession?

Thanks to scientific and technical research, there have been marked advances made both in the international and the local fora. Notwithstanding the decrease in surgical numbers, technology has helped the profession to tap into other specialities and also to diversify the service provided. This has led to the survival of the 65 year old profession.

Locally, the department has been taken over from British perfusionists and has been running with a local team of perfusionists for the past 14 years. Since then the department has made progresses and is keeping in line with practices elsewhere. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement.

...What motivates you as a professional?

I find various aspects of the profession motivating. Firstly, the right blend of technical and clinical expertise required suites my professional expectations. Working in a multidisciplinary setting with a common patient oriented goal, where every member is valued as an equal contributor to reach the common goal, is another. However, like any healthcare profession, the knowledge that the profession strives at making a difference to the patient's life is the major motivator.

Training in Dosimetry of Static Photon Cells

The Lead Medical Physics Expert (Radiotherapy) working at Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre attended a five day training course organised by the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). There were 221 international applications submitted to attend the training course out of which 18 Medical Physicists were selected to participate following completion of an online entry test. The Directorate

for Allied Health Care Services facilitated funding to attend this free course that took place during 12th-16th April 2018. Modern radiotherapy has substantially increased the use of small radiation fields such as for Stereotactic techniques and Dynamic Modulated delivery. These treatments are not only performed with specialized dedicated machines including Cyberknife and Gammaknife; but also with conventional, non-dedicated linear accelerators equipped with high-resolution multi-leaf collimators.



In radiotherapy, accurate doses are essential. Therefore, a key requirement in radiotherapy is consistent reference dosimetry and consistent procedures. For conventional radiotherapy this has been achieved by internationally adopted codes of practice (COP) including the IAEA Technical Report Series 398: Absorbed Dose Determination in External Beam Radiotherapy that has been adopted in the local clinical setting. A joint working group between the IAEA and the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) has written a new small field COP for the non-conventional machines and newer techniques using small fields for radiotherapy. The aim of this course was to teach participants how to implement the new COP Technical Report Series (TRS)-483: Dosimetry of Small Static Fields Used in External Beam in the clinic.

This training course has provided an excellent learning opportunity to understand the new COP from the main authors Prof Saiful Huq, Prof Hugo Palmans and Dr Karen Christaki. An in depth understanding of the physics behind the dosimetry for small fields, clinical implementation and methods for data collection were addressed both theoretically and during practical sessions. This course has provided new knowledge and skills required to first review existing data collected prior to this new COP and investigate the impact on dosimetric data arising from new recommendations. Moreover, this knowledge and skills gained can be applied to new machines not yet available in Malta such as Cyberknife and Gammaknife that make use of unconventional reference field sizes as is typically in linear accelerators such as the Elekta Synergy and Elekta Versa HD.

SOS (Sequential Oral Sensory) Approach to Feeding

For the first time, the Association of Speech Language Pathologists (ASLP) organised an event for professionals who are interested in learning about the SOS Approach to Feeding, brought through Toomey & Associates, Inc. The 4 'Day Basic Training Conference' provided a comprehensive understanding of the theory



of the SOS Approach. It was held between the 26th and 29th March. It also provided an in-depth understanding of how children learn to eat and not to eat. General and specific feeding treatment strategies, along with details regarding the assessment of feeding disorders were covered.

The Directorate through the training vote sponsored 2 dietitians to attend this highly beneficial event which provided a holistic approach to feeding.

Updates from the Directorate

The Directorate is currently actively involved in various collective agreements. Also as one can note from the newsletters, the Directorate is proud to support ongoing training initiatives. Currently the Directorate is also participating in the Human Resources planning for the next 3 years.

Allied Health Care Services Directorate

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Did you know?.....

Malta had free state-of-the art healthcare since 1534. The Sacra Infermeria, or the 'Holy Infirmary', in Valletta was a state-of-the-art hospital at the time of its establishment by the Order of the Knights of Malta in 1574. It had a capacity of over 600 beds.