Introduction by the Institute’s Executive Directors, Prof Jean Karl Soler & Prof Isabel Stabile

Dear Colleagues,

The Mediterranean Institute of Primary Care (MIPC) was set up with the long-term financial support of a Trust established with the Bank of Valletta. The MIPC is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation which supports research and training within the domain of primary care.

The MIPC is already running courses set up by foreign Universities in clinical disciplines, such as ultrasound for GPs and plans to expand the choice to Masters, Diploma, and certificate courses. We also expect to run seminars by GPs for GPs on a regular basis. We aim to identify niches and wherever possible address educational needs.

What do we have planned for 2008/9? Take a look at the Forthcoming Events Section! We plan to run a seminar on electronic medical records and launch a low cost Windows-based electronic patient record. We plan to have a seminar on calculating cardiovascular risk for targeting patients with anti-hypertensive and anti-lipid therapy based on a scientific approach. We also plan to run a surgical skills course for GPs early next year.

Jean Karl Soler and Isabel Stabile

The MIPC welcomes members from all Mediterranean countries and from any of the disciplines that form the primary care team nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, pharmacists, social workers, speech & language pathologists, occupational therapists and more...

Join now – Don’t be left out!

Enquires about membership should be directed to mipc@yesitmatters.com
Inauguration of the Institute on 23rd May 2008

Welcome Address by the IAC Chair, Dr Inge Okkes

Dear Colleagues,

“Primary care is the provision of integrated, accessible health care services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing a large majority of personal health care needs, developing a sustained partnership with patients, and practicing in the context of family and community.” (Definition of Primary Care, Institute of Medicine, 1996).

On the 23rd May 2008, the Mediterranean Institute of Primary Care (MIPC) was inaugurated at the Parish Centre in Attard. The MIPC is a non-governmental international organization supporting academic development of primary health care. The aims of the MIPC programmes are to support, commission, coordinate and conduct policy-relevant research studies and training programmes on primary care, and relevant clinical, preventive and public health policies, and on systems to improve the evidence-base that drives quality primary health care services within the Mediterranean setting.

I am honoured to have been asked to Chair the International Advisory Committee with members from Malta, Italy, Turkey, the US and Greece. The Committee includes eminent international researchers in the field of primary care including Prof. Frank Dobbs from Northern Ireland, Prof. Dr. Henk Lamberts from the Netherlands, as well as Prof. Ladislav Kohout from the U.S.

The MIPC currently has around 50 members, academics from Malta and the Mediterranean region who are involved in research in primary care, and come from a background of family medicine, community gynaecology, nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, psychology and others.

I hope you share our enthusiasm for this exciting new initiative and hope to welcome you in person at one of our forthcoming seminars.

Inge Okkes
Primary Health Care: Quo Vadis?

MAM and MIPC jointly organise International Conference on Primary Health Care in Malta on 24th May 2008

The Medical Association of Malta (MAM) and the Mediterranean Institute of Primary Care (MIPC) jointly collaborated in organising an International Conference entitled “Primary Health Care Quo Vadis?” at the Corinthia Palace Hotel in Attard. The Conference was supported by a sponsorship from Bial.

The Conference was opened by MAM president, Dr. Martin Balzan and was well attended by general practitioners across the island as well as by high-level Government officials. Among the guest speakers were H.E. President Emeritus Prof. Guido de Marco, the Hon. Dr Joseph Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Dr Denis Vella Baldacchino, Director of Primary Health Care.

Other guest speakers included Prof Frank Dobbs and Prof Jean Karl Soler, University of Ulster, Prof Henk Lamberts and Dr Inge Okkes, formerly of the University of Amsterdam, as well as Prof. Isabel Stabile, Florida State University College of Medicine. Streaming of Hon. Dr. Joseph Cassar’s speech can be found at www.mam.org.mt

There is ample evidence that primary health care is effective in preventing illness and death and is associated with a more equitable distribution of health in populations. International studies show that the strength of a country’s primary health care system is associated with improved population health outcomes for mortality from all-causes, as well as premature death from major respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.
The newly elected Government of Malta has committed itself to a major reform of primary health care. This will presumably involve improving available community-based medical services, providing new community services and facilitating private primary medical care with improved access to new and existing services and therapies.

The drive for such a reform is the increasing expense of secondary medical care provided in hospitals, which is not necessarily superior to more accessible and less expensive care provided close to home.

Following an extensive process of consultation held during 2007, The Ministry of Social Policy has drawn up a strategic report on the reform of Primary Health Care and Community Care. A Working Group has been set up to advise on the implementation of a major element of the whole reform - Patient Registration.

Dr. Sammut MD., DipHSc, MScH, MScPC&GP (Ulster), MMCFD is Joint Coordinator, Specialist Training Programme in Family Medicine, Malta and Assistant Lecturer in Family Medicine, University of Malta Medical School.
Spotlight on Research

Over-the-Counter FP-7 Project

The MIPC has been invited to participate in a two-year long FP-7 funded research project on assessing over-the-counter (OTC) prescribing in primary care coordinated by its Greek International Advisory Committee member, Prof. Christos Lionis. The project aims to identify influential factors in prescribing OTC medication as well as in the inappropriate use of medicines in primary care settings in various Southern European countries, and to implement pilot interventions in order to test the effectiveness of the proposed modifications.

Other partners in the project include the University of Crete, Clinic of Social and Family Medicine, Greece, the University of Crete, Clinic of Social and Family Medicine, Greece, the School of Health Sciences, University of Linköping, Sweden, the Institute of Social and Cultural Sciences, Leiden University, The Netherlands, the Association of General Practice in Cyprus, the French Society of General Medicine, the Turkish Association of Family Physicians, the Social & Clinical Pharmacy Department, Faculty of Pharmacy (Hradec Kralove), Charles University, Czech Republic, the Greek National School of Public Health, the Greek Association of General Practitioners, the Department of Family Medicine, National Autonomous University of Mexico, the International Federation of Primary Care Research Network, and the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians (WONCA).

Research Clinics

The MIPC is pleased to announce that it will be running regular research clinics for young (and not so young) researchers from all disciplines in primary care who wish to discuss the methodology, result analysis or publication of their work.

If you are interested please contact Jean Karl Soler on jksoler@synapse.net.mt or Isabel Stabile at isabel.stabile@yahoo.com for an appointment. Research clinics will be free of charge for members.

We would like to highlight ongoing or planned research in Primary Care by all multidisciplinary team members. Do please drop us a line if you would like your work to be highlighted in the Institute’s next Newsletter.
Recent Publications by MIPC Members

**Burnout in European family doctors: the EGPRN study**
*The coming of age of ICPC*
*Family Practice Volume 25, Number 4, August 2008*
http://fampra.oxfordjournals.org/current.dtl

For the first time ever, Family Practice, the premier journal of family medicine in Europe has published two articles in one issue authored by a Maltese family doctor. The first article is a European study of burnout in family doctors. The second article is an important position paper on the International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC), written by the leading experts on the classification. For details follow the link above or contact Prof. Soler at jksoler@synapse.net.mt.

**Primary Care: Quo Vadis?**
*Isabel Stabile & Jean Karl Soler*
*Journal of the Malta College of Pharmacy Practice*
*Issue 14, Summer 2008*

Primary Care has a critical role to play in each country’s health system. It enhances links within the sector both vertically, between primary and secondary care and public health services, and horizontally, among the various health professionals (family doctors, pharmacists, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech language therapists etc) working at the primary level. It provides a platform for the care continuum and is critically important in managing chronic conditions, where successful health outcomes are influenced by continuity and personalized care. Lastly, it enables multisectoral responses to be made, by linking the health system with the social and education sectors.
Medical Care Begins at Home
Isabel Stabile & Jean Karl Soler
Times of Malta 6th July 2008

There is ample evidence that primary care is more effective in preventing illness and death when compared to health care systems that feature strong secondary care structures. The reasons for this are many, and include the fact that appropriate referrals to secondary care by a primary care doctor familiar with the patient, reduce unnecessary investigations and procedures which may harm patients. Contemporary medical care brings dangers as well as benefits, and primary care doctors are trained to ensure that only those patients who are likely to benefit from specialist care are exposed to it.

However, in Malta more than two-thirds of the 111,688 people attending the Mater Dei emergency department in 2007 went there without first consulting their family doctor. Placing the family doctor between the patient and the hospital protects patients by reducing both unnecessary procedures and possible complications.

If you have published articles or reports that relate to Primary Care, please forward details to mipc@yesitmatters.com so that we can include them in our next Newsletter.
I Have a Question…..

**Q:** What is primary care & what is unique about it?

**A:** Primary care is the provision of integrated, high-quality, accessible health care services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing a full range of personal health and health care needs, developing a sustained partnership with patients, practicing in the context of family and community, and working to minimize disparities across population sub-groups.

The core attributes of primary care include*:

- It serves as a point of first contact for the patient, playing a key role in access to care and in coordinating care for patients who use multiple providers or specialists;
- Uncertainty is a common attribute of clinical decision making in primary care;
- Primary care practice is information intensive;
- Opportunities to promote health and prevent disease are intrinsic to primary care;
- A sustained personal relationship between patient and clinician is a key aspect of primary health care, emphasizing the importance of compassion, continuity, and communication between provider and patient.

- It is holistic and comprehensive, focusing on the whole person and taking into account his or her social context;

## Forthcoming Events

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<td>25th October 2008</td>
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<td>January 2009</td>
<td>Arterial Hypertension &amp; Cardiovascular Risk Seminar</td>
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<td>Evidence-based Medicine Workshop</td>
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<td>EGPRN International Research Methods Course</td>
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<td>TransHis Users Group Seminar</td>
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