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Family doctors can do more if they are given more tools

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) is a Voluntary Organisation (VO/0973) that strives to improve the academic and clinical performance of family doctors (known as “it-tobba tal-familja” or “general practitioners”) and the standards of primary health care in our country.

The Association of Private Family Doctors (APFD) is a Voluntary Organisation (VO/1803) that strives to improve family medicine and primary health care in our country on behalf of the private family doctors (known as “it-tobba tal-familja” or “general practitioners”) and their patients.

The MCFD and the APFD point out that during the COVID-19 pandemic family doctors rose to the occasion and kept serving the citizens of our country, helping to dampen potential excess mortality from a number of chronic diseases. In the next months, as our country moves gradually but surely towards a next phase of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the medical community needs to face unmet needs from patients who were afraid to approach medical services.

Family doctors can do more if they are given more tools.

The two Voluntary Organisations encourage decision makers to fully roll-out the national electronic patient health records for primary care and to improve communication between primary and secondary care by investing in the digital interfaces needed to put all patient information from different medical branches available online. They also request a route for all family doctors to be able to apply for free (Schedule V) medication on behalf of their patients; to make more investigations available to all family doctors and to make permanent the shortcuts to bureaucratic triangulations that worked so well during the last months.

All the above would improve the patient experience of the health service. They would decrease the number of stops needed and days taken off work to access health services. They would also decrease costs of hospital consultations, as well as allowing the hospital consultants to focus on the more needy cases.

The MCFD and APFD encourage decision makers to invest in the participation of Family Doctors in the prevention of cancer, to complement the massive investment made in the past years in screening, early diagnosis, treatment and hospital management.

Finally, the two Voluntary Organisations urge decision makers to create a research fund for primary care that includes research into the prevention of cancer in its broad sense.

Dr Edward Zammit

Honorary President MCFD

Dr Anthony Azzopardi

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