

MCFD Annual Report 2023

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A) Internal Structure

1. VO/0973

MCFD is a **Non-Governmental Organisation** with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations (OCVO) with VO Number VO/0973. Hence the rights and responsibilities of MCFD are within a regulated framework. Members can refer to the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations or check on website www.voluntaryorganisations.gov.mt.

MCFD is certified as compliant with the OCVO until 2020. Attempts are ongoing to sort out the issues raised in the Annual Report 2022. Consequently, the MCFD is not compliant for 2021 and 2022, and cannot use the Civil Society Funds to cover the WONCA Membership fee, the WONCA Council meetings and the Vasco da Gama/EYFDM exchanges. Currently a public consultation is in process to modify the law about Voluntary Organisations; it is proposed that Vos are divided into different categories.

2. MCFD Council

The **members of the council in 2023** are:

- a. Dr Edward Zammit – Honorary President and SAC Representative;
- b. Dr Jason Bonnici – Honorary Secretary and Vice-President;
- c. Dr Dorothy Zammit – Honorary Treasurer;
- d. Dr Ann Marie Scerri – Honorary Registrar and WONCA Representative;

- e. Dr Stefania Micallef – CPD team;
- f. Dr Karl Cutajar – CPD team;
- g. Dr Marica Galea resigned in 2023;
- h. Dr Gianluca Bezzina resigned in 2023;
- i. Dr Jacob Vella resigned on 18th March 2023.
- j. Dr Ian Psaila became new council member in 2023.

Dr Jean Karl Soler is CPD Lead.

Dr Jordy Borg is Assistant Officer for the administration of MCFD’s facebook page.

Dr Yanica Vella is the National Exchange Co-ordinator for the European Young Family Doctors Movement (EYFDM, previously known as Vasco da Gama Movement). During 2023 she was elected on the EYFDM Council as exchange co-ordinator. More details are found in a subsequent section.

Dr Esther Muscat is the MCFD representative for the European Young Family Doctors Movement (EYFDM, previously known as Vasco da Gama Movement). More details are found in a subsequent section.

Dr Leonard Callus is Assistant Officer as GP Trainee representative and webmaster. As the GP trainees' representative for the cohort of 2020-2023, he ensured effective representation of fellow colleagues in training-related matters. One significant challenge faced in 2020 was maintaining training amidst COVID restrictions. With the assistance of the training program, lectures were successfully transitioned to online platforms. Additionally, he helped to clarify requirements for the MCFD Summative Exam, particularly concerning the Recorded Case Assessment (RCA) exam. This involved specifying mandatory case types, addressing assessment duration, and resolving issues related to video uploads on the online portal. In his role as the webmaster at the Malta College of Family Doctors, he contributed to updating the website in response to the College's requests for new content. This included updating information regarding medical journals issued by the college (JMCFD), enhancing server security and stability, and assisting fellow family doctors/General Practitioners with membership payments and profile updates. Additionally, he implemented a regular backup system to ensure that the website could be swiftly restored in the event of any errors impacting its availability online.

Council Meetings took place on:

- 2nd March 2023 online on Microsoft Teams;
- 28th September 2023 online on Microsoft Teams;
- 14th November 2023 online on Microsoft Teams

In between all deliberations took place via emails. Minutes of the council meetings are available in paper version and online on the MCFD website.

In MCFD work we have the assistance of Ms. Louise Agius in the MCFD Secretariat. A copy of material that passes through MCFD Council is retained at the MCFD Secretariat as a “soft copy” and as a “hard copy”.

The last Annual General Meeting was done on 17th May 2023 at the Malta Federation of Professional Bodies.

3. *Changes to Statutes*

During the Annual General Meeting of 17th May 2023, a proposal for change of statutes in response to the upheaval caused by Dr Jacob Vella and Dr Gianluca Bezzina in 2022 was accepted.

Under the previous version of the statutes:

8.5. The office of Member of Council shall be vacated in any of the following events:

8.5.1. If the member resigns in writing, and such resignation is accepted by Council.

8.5.2. If the member is found guilty of serious professional misconduct by the Medical Council of Malta.

8.5.3. If the member is absent from meetings of the Council for six months without justification.

8.5.4. If the member ceases to be a member of the college.

8.5.5. If the member is removed pursuant to ordinance 8.6.

8.6. During the General Meeting, the College may remove from office any member of the Council before the expiry of his/her period of office by a simple majority vote.

The new version as accepted by the Assembly during the AGM reads:

8.5. The office of Member of Council shall be vacated in any of the following events:

8.5.1. If the member resigns in writing, and such resignation is accepted by Council.

8.5.2. If the member is found guilty of serious professional misconduct by the Medical Council of Malta.

8.5.3. If the member is absent from meetings of the Council for six months without justification.

8.5.4. If the member ceases to be a member of the college.

8.5.5. If the member is removed pursuant to ordinance 8.6.

8.5.6. **If the member does not comply with the legal requirements emanating from national entities that regulate Voluntary Organisations, such as the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and the Malta Business Registry.**

8.6. During the General Meeting, the College may remove from office any member of the Council before the expiry of his/her period of office by a simple majority vote.

4. *Membership*

By end of 2023, MCFD has:

- 216 fully paid-up members;
- 120 members with pending membership fees;
- 11 fully paid-up associate members.

Of note is the increase in paid-up full members because of the return of CME activities, an effort to ensure payment of membership fee if the family doctor is getting any sort of remuneration from the MCFD and the office secretary's work. Slowly GP Trainees and FY doctors are becoming associate members of the MCFD so that they can attend the CME events rather than pay 30 euro per session.

It is to be noted that the prices for the hall and catering for the CME events has risen substantially since pre-COVID times. Efforts are continuously done to find more financially appropriate venues, hence the change in venues from the tradition of the previous years. Non-members are now asked to pay 30 euro for attendance, but this amount does not cover the expenses anymore and the amount to be charged needs to be revisited. Paid-up members, both full and associate, attend events (in person and on line) free of charge however the membership fee nowadays covers the expenses for not more than 3 events – the membership fee may also need to be revisited. The use of hybrid or completely online sessions is helping to decrease expenses.

5. *Fellowship of the Malta College of Family Doctors*

After the discussion during the Annual General Meeting, the Board of Fellows has been set up through the current Fellows of the Malta College of Family Doctors. The Chair is Dr Mario Sammut; the members are Dr Anthony Azzopardi, Dr Jurgen Abela, Dr Philip Sciortino and Dr Marco Grech. The criteria have been refined. A call to apply for the Fellowship has been finalised and will be sent in early 2024. It is planned that the new Fellows will be conferred during the Graduation Ceremony of 8th May 2024.

6. *Reporting obligations*

MCFD is obliged to deliver reports to a number of entities:

- (i) The Malta College of Family Doctors is listed in the Fourth Schedule of the Health Care Professions Act. As per requirement of the relevant Act, each listed association needs to submit an annual activity report of the preceding year to the Superintendent of Public Health by not later than the end of the first quarter of the year. The MCFD is compliant up to 2022.
- (ii) All the documents pertaining to years up to 2020 have been sent to the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations (OCVO). Subsequently, for the documents pertaining to 2021 and 2022 the

MCFD is not compliant because a council member, Dr Gianluca Bezzina, refused to go through the due diligence process by the auditor. Hence the accounts for 2021 and 2022 are not approved by the auditor, and subsequently the MCFD has not forwarded the audited accounts to the OCVO and as such is not compliant with the OCVO. As such it cannot apply for funds which provide part refund of the WONCA membership fee, attendance to WONCA Council meetings and attendance to Vasco da Gama/EYFDM exchanges. This officer resigned in 2023.

- (iii) The MCFD is up-to-date with the requirements of the Malta Business Registry (MBR) until 2023. For the 2022 issue a fine is expected from the MBR for the delay in submissions.
- (iv) Labour Force surveys by the National Statistics Office.

B) Educational Activities

Educational activities are the *raison d'être* of the Malta College of Family Doctors, and it is understandable that they take the majority of the time and effort of the volunteers and service providers available.

1. The Specialist Training Program for Family Medicine

The process leading to the Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST) that opens the door for full Membership of the Malta College of Family Doctors (MMCFD) and consequentially the recommendation to be given the MRCGP(Int) has been one of the pillars for improving the quality of provision of family medicine since the first training program in 2007. It is made up of a 3-year long training process that concludes with a Work-based Assessment and the Summative Examination. In the last decade it has been one of the main remits of MCFD.

During a meeting with new Minister for Health Mr. Jo-Etienne Abela, the MCFD proposed that the training program be increased to 4 years and work on this project is to commence in 2025.

(i) RCGP IDA

As of October 2021, Professor Lindsey Pope is the new RCGP International Development Advisor for Malta instead of Dr Jeremy Stupple, who has retired. She is Professor of Medical Education at the University of Glasgow Medical School and Director of Community Based Medical Education and Director of Professionalism. With a doctorate in health professions education, a postgraduate certificate of medical education and an accolade of other relevant qualifications and achievement, Prof Pope has extensive undergraduate and postgraduate experience and expertise and is intimately familiar with the RCGP assessment framework, having been recently appointed as Deputy Future Module Development lead for the MRCGP. She visited Malta to familiarize herself with the Specialist Training Program in Family Medicine and its stakeholders in January 2023 and her next visit is expected in Q4 of 2024.

(ii) Curriculum

The updated Curriculum for Specialist Training Programme in Family Medicine was completed in 2021 and is now in use by the more recent cohorts of Trainees in Family Medicine.

(iii) The Assessment Team

The Assessment Team responsible for seeing out the execution of the Summative Exam for Specialists in Family Medicine in 2023 was made up of Dr Cristina Farrugia Mintoff as Assessment Lead and Dr Nicola Laporto, Dr Elanja Reiff, Dr Arlene Bonello and Dr Glenn Garzia as members. Dr Patricia De Gabriele was contracted as mentor. The work includes co-ordination of the examiners, marshalls and Angoff teams, the training and co-ordination of the AKT Writers group, where producing good quality AKT questions in quantity annually is a challenge, and training of the examiners for the RCA. Dr Lynn Pace and Dr Ann Marie Scerri were the members of the Quality Assessment team. For the past years the running of the Assessment Team has been stable; the newer formula of its composition seems to be working a balance between flexibility and experience.

Since 2022, contracts were produced to regulate the work of the Assessment Team by lawyer Dr Joseph Gatt, through a number of meetings with Honorary President Dr Edward Zammit and Honorary Secretary Dr Jason Bonnici. Dr Patricia De Gabriele signed the contract as mentor but the Assessment Team proper declined to sign any contracts due to the uncertainty caused by the gossip propagated as described above.

(iv) Data Protection Policy

To date the material related to the exams since 2010 has been kept in the personal homes of the people involved in the Assessment Team and in late 2021 lawyer Dr Joseph Gatt has been requested to provide advice on a policy on data

protection for the MCFD. Subsequently lawyers Dr Ilona Agius and Dr Joseph Gatt, through a number of meetings with Honorary President Dr Edward Zammit and Honorary Secretary Dr Jason Bonnici, prepared Data Retention Policy and General Privacy Policy documents for MCFD. The documents are available on the MCFD website.

(v) Get Qualified Scheme

The administrative issues with the Get Qualified Scheme on what is the official award and which is the awarding institution has been cleared up by the Honorary Registrar Dr Anne Marie Scerri, allowing the GP Trainees to reclaim expenses through the Get Qualified scheme with the correct titles. This should make it easier for the MCFD to plan a way forward to attain at least break even in the expenses related to running the Summative Exam. The list for the Get Qualified Scheme is forwarded to Malta Enterprise and it was arranged with that office that new specialists in family medicine can apply for the Get Qualified Scheme by using either the CSST or the MMCFD, to allow specialists in family medicine who do not wish to apply for membership of the MCFD to also be refunded by the Get Qualified Scheme.

(vi) Graduation ceremony

The Graduation ceremony was done at the Casino Maltese in Valletta In May 2023. The Chief Medical Officer Mr Walter Busuttil attended and addressed the audience. Other speakers were MCFD President Dr Edward Zammit, who outlined humane support for doctors in training, Dr Mario Sammut obo the Specialist Training Programme Co-ordinators, who outlined the efforts of many along many years to establish the training programme, and PHCD CEO Mrs Roseanne Camilleri, who outlined a vision of health centres being the place where secondary care is made available closer to the public and praised the Telemedicine Centre.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Continued Medical Education (CME) Activities

The program of CPD for the paid-up members of the MCFD remains its main educational service for the members of the College. It is the major point of contact with the general membership. The program for 2023 totalled 77 CPD Points between activities organized and endorsed by the College.

The Officer in charge of CPD is Dr Jean Karl Soler. The Honorary Treasurer Dr Dorothy Zammit and the Honorary Secretary Dr Jason Bonnici help as ex-ufficio members. Dr Stefania Micallef, Dr Leonard Callus and Dr Karl Cutajar organized 6 CME sessions on Geriatrics. Since the end of the year 2022, through the input of Dr Dorothy Zammit, the MCFD organized hybrid educational sessions (in person and online), which was positively accepted. Dr Elena Fava has designed a template for digital certification of attendance to an event, to be used as from 2023.

The CPDAS (Continued Professional Development Accreditation Scheme) folder created some 15 years ago is still in use and a certificate is provided to those who submit the necessary yearly CPD points by contacting the Honorary Registrar.

The presentation of evidence of CME attendance is a requirement such as for example in the call for Fellowship of the Malta College of Family Doctors and may be required for other applications. MCFD keeps the attendance records until the yearly reconciliation with the CPDAS certificate; it is the duty of the member to reconcile his/her attendances to get the yearly certificate.

The following were the sessions organised by the MCFD:

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Event</u> |
|------------------|--|
| 27 February 2023 | The Family Doctor's role in preventing fractures in the elderly – Dr Ian Baldacchino |
| 07 March 2023 | ADHD Diagnostic criteria and manifestation in children and adults - TAASC |
| 22 March 2023 | Community Services for the elderly - Dr. Renzo Degabriele |
| 04 April 2023 | Update on frailty in the elderly |
| 13 April 2023 | Hand and Elbow Pathologies - Kurstein Sant |

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|-------------------|---|
| 27 April 2023 | Geriatric Dermatology - The Family Doctor's Perspective |
| 21 June 2023 | Management and Treatment of Achilles Tendinopathy - Ms. Tiziana Mifsud/Mr. Ivan Farrugia |
| 30 June 2023 | Health Promotion and Aging: Practical Applications for Family Doctors |
| 19 July 2023 | Primary and secondary care referral pathways endocrine surgery - Mr. Matthew Cassar |
| 14 September 2023 | Brain Based Rehabilitation to alleviate Musculoskeletal Ailments - Dr. Danica Spiteri |
| 27 September 2023 | Delirium & Dementia for Family Doctors - Dr. Nicole Zerafa |
| 05 October 2023 | Pandemic management for GPs - Prof. C. Gauci, Prof. Neville Calleja |
| 11 October 2023 | Cardiology update for GPs - Malta Cardiology Society |
| 30 October 2023 | End of Life Care in the Elderly Population - Prof. Pierre Mallia |
| 02 November 2023 | Clinical presentations of the most common vestibular disorders - Dr. Snezana Andric Filipovic |
| 07 November 2023 | Bigger is not always better - National Antibiotic Prescribing Guidelines - Prof. M. Borg |
| 28 November 2023 | Medication Safety in Elderly Care - Dr. Marco Grech |

The following are the sessions endorsed by the MCFD:

| Date | Event |
|---------------|--|
| 09 March 2023 | Lymphoedema – Physiotherapy Services at Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre |
| 31 May 2023 | New Options in Addressing Unmet Clinical Needs for Her2 negative Locally Advanced/Metastatic Breast Cancer |
| 14 June 2023 | A true need to treat dyslipidaemia - Prof. Leo De Luca |

2. *Other Educational Initiatives:*

- (i) A number of undergraduate and postgraduate students, mostly from Maltese medical and pharmacy courses and a minority from overseas, request the support of MCFD to forward questionnaires to members to have the input on a topic. This is done through goodwill for the benefit of collegiality and of scientific research. Most requests are polite. Only a couple have over the years actually kept their original promise of providing family doctors with feedback on their findings by organising an event or by sending a final report.
- (ii) WONCA provided educational webinars on health-specific subjects throughout the year. The links were made available to members through the weekly WONCA Europe and the monthly WONCA World newsletter which were disseminated via email.

3. *Research Activities*

No new research activities in 2023.

4. *Trainers and Teachers in Family Medicine*

- (i) Teachers' Course
Since Euract Level 1 was going to be organised in Malta no Teachers' Course was done in 2023.

- (ii) CPD for Trainers in Family Medicine
The FutureLearn online courses 'Clinical Supervision: Assessing and Providing Feedback', 'Clinical Supervision: Confidence', and 'Clinical Supervision: Teaching and Facilitating Learning' run by the University of East Anglia, were identified by the MCFD Education Committee as the CPD requirement for 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively required by the 'Contract for Service - Trainer in Family Medicine'.
- (iii) EURACT Course Level 1 and Level 3
The MCFD has shown interest in hosting EURACT Course Level 1 in Malta in March/April 2023 and this was accepted. Subsequently it showed interest to be nominated to host EURACT Course Level 3 in Malta in the last quarter of 2023, but the decision was for the event to be done in Israel. Such events entail a lot of work on the few same people in the preparation, logistics, finances and carrying them out, but are seen positively as they put MCFD on the map of organizations of family doctors within the WONCA family and are evidence of the commitment of Maltese family doctors to improve the quality of delivery of family medicine. Financially EURACT Level 1 came at a small loss for the MCFD.

C) Communication

1. Journal of the Malta College of Family Doctors

The Journal continued its work thanks to the efforts of its Editorial Board, made up of Dr Mario Sammut, Dr Glorianne Pullicino and Dr Marco Grech. The issues are nowadays distributed online only due to increasing difficulty in finding sponsors and increasing distribution costs of the paper version; they are uploaded on OAR@UoM and are accessible via this link: <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/5332>. One issue of the JMCFD is issued per year around December due to lack of submissions.

2. Public Relations

A sustained effort was done to continue to bring the message of family doctors amongst the general public. Dr Jordy Borg is posting on the facebook page of the MCFD. Dr Leonard Callus is posting some of the CME events on social media.

- (i) 2 Press Releases were done jointly with the Association of Private Family Doctors:
 - a. Joint Press Release MCFD and APFD – World Family Doctors’ Day (14.05.2023);
 - b. Joint Press Release MCFD and APFD – Proposals for Budget 2022 (17.09.2023). Submission to Finance Department also done in line with the Press Release statements.
- (ii) 1 Press Release was done jointly with the other colleges showing solidarity with medical doctors in Gaza Strip (21.11.2023)

3. Website

Since 2022 the new website was slowly but gradually replenished with new text and new sections. Of note are: a list with contacts of “Specialists in Family Medicine in your area” for the general public to access in case of need: <https://mcfcd.org.mt/generalpublic/specialists-in-family-medicine-in-your-area>; how to apply for the Get Qualified scheme; How to start working as a private family doctor; the members’ only section of the website which needs prior online login includes most of the Agendas and Minutes of council meetings of previous years; the CPD events eligible for the CPDAS folder; the material related to the Specialist Training Program in Family Medicine, the Press Releases issued; the JMCFD, the Vasco da Gama Movement and the possibility of paying the membership online.

Since 2022 the Newsletter is the main portal for sending information to members. It does need continuous addition of new members, although it is possible, and a number have actually done so, to subscribe to the newsletter online. Feedback has been positive as the image portrayed is more professional. MCFD officers have their distinct MCFD emails. Members are encouraged to use MCFD official emails in their communication with MCFD officers to allow a continuation of the communication thread if and when handover of offices occurs.

4. Consultations

- (i) The MCFD participated in the consultation organized by the Malta Business Registry on 16th March 2023;
- (ii) The MCFD participated in the World Arthritis Day event organized by ARAM on 31st October 2023;
- (iii) The MCFD participated in the meeting with Health Regulation on 31st October 2023.

D) International Fora

1. *WONCA (World Organisation of Family Doctors)*

- (i) Dr Dorothy Zammit (online) and Dr Yanica Vella (in person) were the delegates of MCFD to the WONCA World event in Australia; Dr Anne Marie Scerri (online) and Dr Maria Grazia Grech (online) were the delegates to WONCA Europe event in Brussels.
- (ii) WONCA newsletters and invitations for conferences, debates and seminars are reaching members through the email service.

2. *EURACT (European Association of Teachers in Family Medicine/General Practice)*

- (i) During 2022 MCFD applied to host the EURACT Level 1 Trainer's course. This was seen as an opportunity for family doctors from Malta to learn alongside family doctors from other countries while achieving the necessary certification. The MCFD also hopes for a continued collaboration with EURACT and is interested to eventually apply to host the EURACT Level 3 course. Such events put MCFD on the map of organisations of family doctors within the WONCA family and are evidence of the commitment of Maltese family doctors to improve the quality of delivery of family medicine.
- (ii) A Trainer's portfolio created by EURACT has been forwarded via MCFD through the Training Co-ordinators to Trainers in Family Medicine for use. Process is voluntary but greatly encouraged.

3. *EUOPREV (The European Network for Prevention and Health Promotion in Family Medicine and General Practice)*

MCFD participation in EurPrev has been lacking since 2013. Since 2019, Dr Maria Grazia Grech is a EUOPREV council member.

4. *Vasco da Gama Movement/ European Young Family Doctors Movement (EYFDM)*

As National Exchange Coordinator for Malta the role of Dr Yanica Vella was to be actively involved within the European Young Doctors Movement, which is an organisation that aids in getting young doctors together. These include ones still in training and those in the 5 years after that. As the Exchange coordinator she has been promoting exchange programs, conference exchanges, and also forums that are upcoming within other countries and also facilitate in them happening. Periodically she has been giving talks to the trainees in order for them to have a better understanding on how exchange programmes function and also so that they familiarise themselves with the application process and be able to understand the extent of such an opportunity. She is also in contact with the National Exchange Coordinators from other countries with whom she organises periodic meetings to discuss ways of improving exchange programs and making them more accessible to everyone. As the NEC she tries to attend conferences and also forums organised by

EYFDM and also WONCA in order to represent Malta and have our voice heard both within Europe and internationally. In 2023 Dr Yanica Vella was elected as the Exchange Coordinator for the EYFDM.

As National Delegate of the EYFDM the role of Dr Esther Muscat was to attend the EYFDM preconference and WONCA conference in Brussels, during which period EYFDM council meetings were also held. She participated in an EYFDM project called the "Bridge project" in which the project co-ordinators allocated applicants to a group of other doctors who are interested in similar topics. Her group consisted of a doctor from Greece, another doctor from Turkey and myself. They collaborated on a topic "Bridging cultural divides" through four online meetings over a few months during which cultural aspects in family medicine within each of our countries, different cultures (both patients and colleagues) encountered, and positive aspects of respective practices were discussed. They also carried out a review of literature available on cultural aspects and divides in family medicine and discussed them in the context of the respective practices too. The discussions and findings were presented by Dr Esther Muscat obo her group in the Brussels WONCA conference. At the preconference and WONCA conference she also met special interest group members within the EYFDM and has joined a special interest group in women's health. During the council meetings held throughout the year (both online and face-to-face) she met other members of the council in person and spoke about family medicine in Malta, participated in discussions regarding EYFDM – current state, future aspects and EYFDM's role within WONCA, participated in voting for several routine council events including council meeting agendas and proposals but also voting for main changes including the new council executive members election, took the opportunity to promote our local exchange officer to become the exchange co-ordinator, a member of the executive. Locally, she presented and promoted EYFDM's work and collaborated with the local exchange officer to promote exchanges among general practitioner trainees, especially the new incoming trainees in the half-day release course, used trainee group chats to promote EYFDM activities. She has completed and sent reports of the EYFDM council's activities to the Malta College of Family Doctors.

Jason Bonnici
Honorary Secretary
31st March 2023