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Press Release World Family Doctors Day – 19th May 2024

Healthy Planet, Healthy People

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) and the Association of Private Family Doctors (APFD), on the occasion of world family doctor's day, in line with the message of the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians (WONCA), look forward for further steps that strengthen our environment as a means to improve people's health.

World Family Doctor Day, celebrated annually on May 19th, is a key event in the calendar of family doctors. It is dedicated to highlighting the vital contributions of family doctors in healthcare systems worldwide. This year the focus is on the connection between the health of the planet and the well-being of our patients.

Over the past decades our country has successfully invested in relevant issues, such as:

- its waste water infrastructure to improve the quality of bathing water with notable decrease in the number of cases of infections coming from swimming in contaminated coastal waters;
- the management of nature and marine reserves, leading to a better experience for people looking for mental and physical therapy and well-being in natural areas; and
- the conversion of heavy fuel oil to natural gas in its generation of electricity, drastically reducing noxious particulates, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides in the air we breathe.

The two Voluntary Organisation state that more investment and strong decisions are needed to achieve improved targets, such as:

- a drastic reduction in the emissions of noxious gases and particulates from vehicular traffic, as the European Environment Authority's Air Quality Report 2022 attributes 150 premature deaths in Malta due to PM2.5 alone;
- a hastened endeavour to achieve waste reduction, recycling and management targets to reduce the release of harmful chemicals and gases, the contamination of water sources, the emission of human-related methane gas and the opportunities for disease vectors;
- a rethinking of urban spatial planning, as more people are feeling the psychological impact of living in a permanent construction site that is changing the landscape of traditional villages and the fabric of our communities, coupled with a renewed commitment to more nature reserves that would ameliorate the leisure and wellbeing of people, as proposals such as the Archeological Park at Has-Saptan, Qoton and Zembaq Valleys in Birzebbuga seems stalled and the future of pristine areas like Hondoq ir-Rummien and Delimara is unclear.

Family doctors play a crucial role in promoting the health and well-being of individuals and communities as they are a trusted source of support for patients and families, and would support the necessary strong decisions moving forwards towards sustainability.

Additionally, family doctors call for stakeholders in the health sector to lead by example to bring about the changes necessary to improve the health of our planet and consequently the health of our patients.

Notes

1. World Family Doctor Day, 19th May, was first declared by WONCA in 2010 and has become a day to highlight the role and contribution of family doctors in health care systems around the world. The event is an opportunity to acknowledge the central role of our specialty in the delivery of personal, comprehensive and continuing health care for all of our patients. It is also a chance to celebrate the progress being made in family medicine and the special contributions of family doctors globally.
2. WONCA is an acronym for the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians. WONCA's short name is World Organization of Family Doctors. The Mission of WONCA is to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world through defining and promoting its values, including respect for universal human rights and including gender equity, and by fostering high standards of care in general practice/family medicine. <https://www.globalfamilydoctor.com>

3. 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.
4. The Association of Private Family Doctors (APFD) on the other hand, 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.

Dr Edward Zammit

Honorary President MCFD

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