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Press Release

Position on Outsourcing of Emergency Services

The MCFD and the APFD note the recent request for participation in outsourcing of emergency services, issued without any prior consultation with medical organisations.

The scheme is a resurrection of a failed similar initiative of 15 years ago, issued also for the same reason as today, that is lengthening waiting times at the Emergency service of Mater Dei, nowadays exacerbated not least by a population projected to reach 600,000 by 2027 and an ageing population.

The result of that initiative is known to medical authorities and practitioners, namely that the scheme attracted semi-emergencies that normally attend health centres to the public-funded private service, whilst the people who normally go to Emergency with relatively minor ailments kept going there.

Crucial to a proper impact of a new scheme is prior triaging by medical professionals to direct patients to their family doctor, or to the semi-emergency services in health centres, or to the emergency services in private hospitals or to the Casualty Department of Mater Dei Hospital according to the case.

Fundamental to this process is the understanding that:

- patient safety is of utmost importance in the provision of healthcare;
- family doctors are gate-keepers of the health system, without which medical services would be overwhelmed;
- emergency services are the remit of specialists trained in emergency medicine, working in a workplace fully resourced for emergencies; and

- continuity of care after discharge from a medical service is a guarantor of lengthier, healthy lives.

The MCFD and the APFD solicit the Department of Health to consult the relevant medical organisations to truly make this initiative the success that our country needs.

The 2 Voluntary Organisations argue that better collaboration between primary, secondary and emergency care is key to solve this and other issues, as this creates efficient and sustainable management pathways. This entails giving family doctors more ownership, more access to tools and resources and more involvement. Digital health is a key resource to merge and integrate all the medical systems together.

Notes:

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.

Dr Edward Zammit

Honorary President MCFD

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