

Improving Medication Use in Older Persons Conference

Tuesday 29th October 2013

Westin Dragonara Resort, St Julian's, Malta

Welcome Speech

Good morning.

Honourable Parliamentary Secretary, Dr Franco Mercieca, Dr O'Mahony, our esteemed speaker, colleagues, on behalf of Dr Cachia, Commissioner for Mental Health and Older Persons, co-members of the Multidisciplinary Focus Group Polypharmacy in Older Persons and my Office colleagues, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to this our first national conference.

I thank you all for turning out in such great numbers – the level of interest shown by the number of registrations we received from a spectrum of healthcare professionals is encouraging and already attests to the importance of the topic which we have gathered to discuss today.

A little bit of background.

The Office of the Commissioner for Mental Health and Older Persons came into being in October 2011. Very soon after, with respect to the field of older persons, we searched for and selected 5 main areas in which, as an Office, we felt that we would like to see action and progress which could positively impact the quality of life of our older citizens.

Based also on what is happening in Europe, we identified 5 areas for action, namely: (1) Adequate nutrition, (2) Falls prevention, (3) Management of chronic diseases, (4) Age Friendly Environment, and last but not least (5) Polypharmacy and the appropriate use of medicines.

After some deliberation, we decided to start with the last.

In October 2012 we set up a multidisciplinary focus group to plan, lead and provide professional and technical input for the organisation of a national conference aimed primarily at raising awareness of the issue amongst healthcare professionals, reaching an interdisciplinary consensus position statement, and coming up with solid recommendations for action in the health and social policy and services area. At first we started by concentrating on the problem of polypharmacy but very early on we felt that we should address the wider issue of appropriate medication use. Hence the name we selected for our conference ie *“Improving Medication Use in Older Persons”*.

The Committee has worked very hard. It formally met 13 times and meetings lasted an average of 2 hours. Many more hours however were devoted in preparation and in the myriad of activities necessary for the realisation of this Conference. I therefore take this opportunity to thank all the members on the Committee as well as all my colleagues at the Office, who all contributed in one way or another and without whom this Conference would never have materialised.

Before I break off, I need to impart three items of **practical information**:

(1) Since our programme is very full I urge you all to please stick to the time as indicated in your conference programme which you will find in the conference booklet inside your information pack.

(2) Since there was an imbalance in the number of first preferences registered for the workshops, we had to reassign a number of participants to their second preference, and a few even to their third to redress the balance. I urge those of

you who have thus been reassigned to please stick to this reassignment. I can assure you that all 6 workshops will be equally interesting and demanding as in the end they will really be discussing the same issues from different starting points. You will find your assigned workshop on a label on the envelope containing your Certificate of Attendance. Workshop participation lists will also be available outside the respective break out rooms.

(3) Enclosed in your conference folder, you will find in addition to the Conference Booklet, several information leaflets, a publication by Dr O'Mahony and colleagues on the STOPP and START criteria, an Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) form, and last but not least an **Evaluation Form** which we would really like you to fill up and leave with us at the end of the Conference.

That over I will without further ado invite the Honourable Dr Franco Mercieca, Parliamentary Secretary for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, to deliver his Opening Address.

Once more I thank you and wish you a good and productive day.