



## **Chairperson Report 2019**

**Presented 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

During 2019 11 board meetings were held on 11 January, 15 February, 8 March, 11 April, 17 May, 14 June, 12 July, 23 August, 27 September, 1 November & 12 December. There was a quorum reached for all of these meetings. In between meetings there was ongoing communication between board members and member organisations via emails and phone calls.

MHN Board is formed by

Gertrude Buttigieg (Chairperson),

Dr Ray Galea (Vice-Chairperson),

Demis Cachia (Treasurer)

Christopher Vella (Secretary)

Moses Azzopardi, Dr Christine Baluci and Godwin Micallef (members)

Unfortunately Malta Health Network (MHN) so far has no office and no premises thus we would like to thank the Commissioner for Mental Health for allowing us to hold meeting at their offices when necessary.

Thanks also to the Malta Medicines Authority for covering our expense to host this AGM at Life Sciences Park.

Last but not least thanks OPM for approving once again the secondment of Ms Melanie Agius Attard to assist MHN in administrative work and upcoming projects.

### **Membership update**

During 2019, MHN received 3 applications for new memberships these were processed and 2 new organization was accepted - Malta Colorectal Cancer Awareness Support Group and Malta Obesity Association whilst the other was not eligible to join. We were informed that 1 organization was dissolved – this was the Incontinence Care Malta and another 2 terminated membership. This gives a total of 40 member organisations. One of the tasks Melanie Agius Attard followed on was update on membership fees and we managed to get various organisations up to date with membership fees which at times these were pending for 2 or 3 years despite repeated reminders. There are other organizations which indicated that they were going through a difficult time, these were left pending for the time being.

## Activities on Local Level

### Meeting with Important Stakeholders:

On 24th May MHN board met for a courtesy visit with the President of Malta, Dr George Vella. He was very interested in the work of MHN and when we explained about the training on Policies he immediately offered his Patronage and support for the events.

20 June 2019 attended for meeting with Deputy Prim Minister, Minister for Health Mr Chris Fearne this was a positive meeting where MHN explained various difficulties encountered and Hon Fearne assured MHN that he was willing to listen to our queries and attention would be given taking in consideration various limitations and asked to get in touch with Dr Anthony Gatt should there be queries to pass on to Ministry.

### TIS funded Training Programme: Empowering patients and Health related NGOs to influence Health Policy at National and International levels

Following request for funds MHN was successful in obtaining funds to carry out this training programme. This targeted Maltese patients and Health related NGOs. The training sessions involved a number of local and foreign speakers who delivered information on how Civil Society can act in a pro-active way in the drawing up of National and International policies and legislation. 2 sessions were held in 2019, these were both held at San Anton Palace, thanks to the courtesy of the Office of the President of Malta and the whole programme was under the distinguished Patronage of HE The President of Malta.

Session 1 The Patient and Civil Society	16th October 2019
Session 2 The Patients and Health Policy	22nd November 2019

Other session to be held in 2020

Session 3 Patients' Empowerment	15th January 2020
Session 4 The Patient and Legislation	7th February 2020
Session 5 Certificates Award Ceremony	28th February 2020

Feedback on training is being evaluated and will be taken in consideration when organizing future events. We shall also be sending a questionnaire to organisations who did not attend for the training to explore why and what can be done to attract them more. Presentations, photos, speakers etc will be available on MHN website shortly.

**Policies document:** Following reflective seminar held by MHN Board in July 2019, it was agreed that a Policies document is developed. This is to bring together various aspects to regulate the work of MHN in a transparent way and based on principals of good governance. Some sections also refer to what MHN expects of member organizations a pdf copy of the document will be available in MHN website from March 2020.

We have submitted application for legal entity and beneficial owners: both processes started but still pending to be finalised by respective offices. Outcome is beyond us and we will keep following and relevant information communicated accordingly.

**Elections for European Parliament:** In collaboration with EPF and ACN, MHN organised a meetings with MEP Candidates, with some 1-1 meetings were held whilst others accepted MHN invitation for meeting held on 28th February. We managed to collect 13 signatures for the EPF Manifesto for MEP elections. We are pleased that 2 out of the 13 MEP Candidates who promised their support were elected namely Dr Alfred Sant and Dr Roberta Metsola. After the elections MHN send congratulations to all elected and Dr Alfred Sant accepted our request to meet up. Meeting was held on 13 September 2019 and it was a very positive experience. Both Dr Metsola and Dr Sant contributed to the SIP 2019 Symposium with a recorded message which was greatly appreciated by all audience at the symposium.

**Collaboration with other entities:** Most of MHN members were invited at Capacity Building Seminar for patient leaders organised by Novartis on 23rd March 2019.

National Cancer Platform: MHN kept its affiliation in the NCP, we participated in events organised for World Cancer Day in February and later in the year when the Platform was formally registered as a foundation with Commissioner for VO, we were recognized as founder members and Prof Ray Galea was elected Chairperson for the NCP.

Contribution to the Smoking and Health Advisory Committee: in 2019 the work of the committee picked up again and met regularly. GB was patient representative nominated on committee. Main work involved contribution to drafting of Smoking Strategy being developed by the Ministry.

Digital and Small health Ecosystems involved other stakeholders including Ministry for Health, University and professionals – meetings were held, however this has been put aside for the time being since it was taking too many resources from MHN.

MCVS elections: Gertrude Buttigieg was elected on MCVS to represent the sector of Health and Disability. Thanks to those organisations who have support these elections and we look forward to closer collaboration for better representation on the Council.

**Visibility:** We have kept website updated as much as possible. There was a positive response by members to promote their events via Calendar and we are willing to keep doing this and improve. We have also used Facebook page extensively to spread out messages. This included the promotion of EPF Manifesto for MEP Elections in May 2019, when a press release was also published listing the names of candidates who support the manifesto and this appeared also on local media. MHN president was invited on different radio programmes to promote Patients' rights and talk about Patient empowerment.

MHN this year promoted through social media: World Patient Safety Day-17th September, World Lung Day – 25th September and 100 Cities against Pain – 28th September.

**Public Consultations:** MHN submitted feedback for the Mental Health Strategy which was open for consultation in 2019. Submitted feedback on Air Quality Consultation carried out in early 2019.

With regards to discussion about Environment and Health, Dr Christine Baluci has attended several meetings representing MHN on the matter.

MHN Chairperson was interviewed for the ESF study being carried out by Ministry for Health on Determinants of Health.

Submitted also recommendations for Budget 2020 to the Ministry for Health. We asked members for their feedback but only received from 4 organisations – their recommendations were included in our document.

We were contacted by Officials from the Ministry of Health to contribute towards work being carried out in the drafting of 'A Health Enhancing Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan for Malta. We assisted also the Department for Policy in Health in finding patients/carers, through collaboration with Hospice Malta, for a focus groups to start the work on a 'Palliative Care Strategy.

**The impact of Pain on Maltese Citizens funded through VOPs:** This project was concluded in 2019 after we received the outstanding payment from MCVS on behalf of the Parliamentary Secretary for Youths, Sports and Voluntary Sector (PSYSVS). In 2019, 2 Posters Presentations about the project were presented at the EFIC Congress held in Valencia in September 2019 and SIP Symposium 2019 held in Brussels in November 2019. GB attended for both events representing both MHN & SIP Malta. Dr Mario Grixti attending for the SIP Symposium and presented the poster on our research and is now working on a paper to be published in a European Journal.

#### **Activities on a European & International Level**

**European Patient Academy for Therapeutic Innovation (EUPATI):** – Mary Vella as Patient representative (substitute) and Prof Pierre Mallia attended for EUPATI AGM in Copenhagen, Denmark on 20th May 2019. On a local level we are not managing to do much with regards to EUPATI due to various difficulties including limited human resources. However we had 3 applications submitted for patients to do the EUPATI Expert training and Christine Montague was selected to take this training. The academic part is fully funded by EUPATI, MHN will be seeking out possible funding options to cover travel and accommodation fees for the 2 face-to-face sessions she has to attend in 2020 & 2021 as part of the training. MHN has already tried to make contacts for funding eg through Medicines Authority Malta, however they are not in a position to fund. But having trained people in the development of medicines etc we will be in a position for collaboration in the Academy for Patient Centered Excellence and Innovation in Regulatory Services set up in 2019 by the Medicines Authority.

**European Patients Forum (EPF):** MHN was represented for the EPF AGM by Demis Cachia. During this meeting changes to EPF statute were approved. One of the main changes is broadening the geographic area of Europe and thus making membership in EPF of organisations not in the EU possible. We supported the EPF Manifesto for the MEP Elections for 2019 as explained earlier. Ms Christine Montague (MS Society), was selected and successfully participated in the EPF Capacity Building Module on Empowering Leadership and Positive Organisational Governance. For this first time this year EPF organised Congress 12-14th

November. MHN was represented by Demis Cachia and we offered to partially support the participation of 2 representatives from MHN organisations, whilst we had chosen 2 persons to attend, at the end of the day only Mary Vella attended. We were invited to submit nominations for participation of Youths for Summer Youth Camp, a representative from Richmond Foundation submitted application Matthew Paris attended for Summer Camp.

We are still contributing to the EPF led project COMPAR-EU project. This is a Horizon 2020 project. EPF is leading the package Eliciting patients' priorities and preferences. This project is looking at chronic conditions primarily Type 2 Diabetes, Obesity, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease and heart failure. We have engaged other representatives from Malta these will be involved in the final stages of the self-care toolkits through webinars, review of documents and 2 face-to-face meetings to be held during 2020 in Brussels.

EPF invited us to send a representative to attend training seminar on Data Saves Life on 17th September – MHN was represented by Dr Christine Baluci.

We were honored with the presence of Ms Elena Balestra (EPF Membership and Capacity Building Manager) was our guest speaker at the TIS training in December. EPF were very happy to support the training programme, for us it was an honour to have her and all audience who attended were very happy with her presentation.

**Active Citizenship Network (ACN):** ACN invited MHN for various events during 2019. 4-5th February 2019, Dr Christine Baluci represented MHN training event organised by ACN in preparation for MEP Elections, Patients' rights day and information on Campaign Towards higher patient safety in EU hospitals - Innovation in hygiene & sanitation to reduce healthcare associated infections and antimicrobial resistance. For Patients' Rights day event 9-10th April, MHN was represented by Gertrude Buttigieg this year the topic was Public Health and better use of resources followed by a session on Digital Health.

In 2019 MHN signed an expression of interest and is now partners in a project by ACN on Understanding for Cardiovascular Prevention Initiative. This is a 2 year project which will involve training and then dissemination of information on a local level. 2 nurses who work in the field of Cardiovascular education and rehabilitation will be representing MHN. The selection was done after there were no suitable candidates from member organisations and it was agreed that these 2 persons could contribute to the project and to local implementation. Malta Health Foundation are also involved in this project with MHN. Another invitation for a project by ACN was also sent to MHN this dealt with Migrant social integration – due to the fact that this was not considered to be within the remit of MHN but ACN asked us to get in touch with Maltese partners, contact was passed on to the Foundation for the Shelter and support of Migrants who are now partners in this project.

**ISAL Foundation:** Signed Expression of interest as participants in project to study Chronic Pain, Project to be funded through Europe for Citizens Fund.

**European Public Health Alliance (EPHA):** we are still members however this year we did not attend AGM. We have been following and actively contributed to the Roadmap for action on

antimicrobial resistance (AMR) published in November 2019 and joined the Stakeholder Network on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). EPHA have also launched the MEP Interest Group on Antimicrobial Resistance: MEPs fight AMR so far there are not Maltese MEPs on this interest group.

**International Alliance for Patients Organisations (IAPO):** – we maintained the membership and supported the dissemination on social media of Patient Safety day and Patient Solidarity day.

**Volonteuropa** invited MHN for AGM however we did not manage to send a representative.

**European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO)** we are in touch with them but at the moment we are on the look-out for a suitable representative.

### **The Future**

1. Last year we prepared a project proposal with the aim of improving the patients' and Professional collaboration with the common goal of improving health outcome. This will also have an Information campaign with ACN as advisors. Separately or jointly we might consider an education campaign on patient safety – funding options sought last year did not work out, to seek other funding opportunities in 2020.
2. As a follow-up to research carried out on Chronic Pain we have maintained SIP Malta active. We are now considering options of how the work in the implementation of some of the policy recommendations which resulted from the research. This could also include partnership in EU funded projects. One will focus on the experience of Chronic Pain Patients and the other on setting up an effective structure to deal with patients' rights. Funds possible to tap on did not address our issues, thus we shall be waiting for new funding programme to see which would be the better options.
3. As a follow-up to our partnership in ACN & EPHA on Anti-microbial resistance we shall be seeking ways of collaboration with local Health Authorities in view of the local Anti-microbial resistance strategy. This theme also happens to have been chosen for Patients' Rights day 2020.
4. As already mentioned we shall seek ways of collaborating more with the Malta Medicines Authority on their Academy for Patient Centred Excellence and Innovation in Regulatory Services.
5. We will be getting together with relevant organisations and stakeholders to tackle the problems which arose in the past months about the management of children with chronic conditions who need medical attention or medication at school.
6. An issue which also arose lately in the media is the right for Life Insurance for people with a chronic condition – we will be getting in touch with organisations and relevant entities to see what can be done.
7. This will be the last year of the current board and thus in 2021 we will have a new board elected, hope that new people will show an interest.