Issue #1 August 2023

BEYOND THE MASK

The Official Newsletter of the
Association of Anaesthesiologists of Malta (AAM)



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PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

DR ANNE MARIE CAMILLERI PODESTA` MD EDAIC EDIC FERC

>>> DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to the first issue of the Association of Anaesthesiologists of Malta's eNewsletter.



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you in my capacity as the new AAM President. The committee feels that it is important to re-establish the tradition of a newsletter to keep members of the association informed about ongoing plans and activities.

The AAM is the professional body representing anaesthetists in Malta practicing anaesthesia, intensive care and pain medicine. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring that we can continue to provide excellent patient care by aiming for the highest standards of safety and quality through training, education, exams, quality improvement, research, and other activities. The AAM supports the trainees' interests and plays an essential role in their education and accreditation.

In spite of its challenges, the COVID pandemic has highlighted the important role anaesthetists play and has served to enrich and enhance our knowledge and skills. We look to the future with optimism but with the awareness that many of our members have experienced variable degrees of burnout and fatigue. It is up to us to ensure that these factors are addressed aggressively to guarantee that our well-being is preserved. This will ultimately result in an overall improvement in the quality of patient care.

We hope that this newsletter will keep you up to date and help you to become more active members of the association by participating in the various activities which are being planned in the near future.

Anne Marie

AAM President



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DR STEPHANIE MIFSUD BSC MD DESAIC

DEAR AAM MEMBERS AND COLLEAGUES,

On behalf of the AAM committee 2022-2025, I would like to warmly welcome you all to the first edition of the revamped AAM electronic newsletter.

In these first eight months of our tenure as the AAM committee, we have strived to keep on consolidating previous committees' work and achievements. In fact, we have already organised a number of well-attended events, including the 2022 AGM, Christmas event, Focus on Paediatric Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Event, team building event, the second edition of the ReACT course, a joint CME event with the department and a Presentation and Public Speaking Event for trainees which was held on the 4th of August.

In addition, the EDAIC Part II was held in person for the first time locally in June 2023, following an agreement between the AAM and ESAIC. This agreement will allow our trainees to be able to have an in-person viva locally as well as benefit from a hefty 50% discount on the Part II fee.

Other events are being planned for the coming months. The next one in the pipeline is the 1st ANATAS (AAM's National Anaesthetic Trainees Academic Showcase) and the end-of-summer social event on the 30th of September. During this event, we will also be commemorating the 40th year of AAM's activity.

In addition, the AAM committee is keeping up with its international representation commitments on the NASC and EBA ESAIC subcommittees and WFSA. The ESA23 Congress in Glasgow offered an excellent opportunity for the AAM committee members to attend meetings, participate in subcommittees, and network. Our aim is to always contribute actively and constructively in order to bring forward our local issues on an international platform. More information can be found in the AAM Past Events Section (pg 6).

This revamped newsletter is meant to showcase the AAM's work and events throughout the preceding months as well as its members' accomplishments. In this issue, you will find the following articles submitted by AAM members: the first instalment detailing the history of hospitals in Malta, members' accounts of participating in the ESAIC TTT course; the first ESAIC Advanced Patient Safety Course, a voluntary trip to Nepal, an unexpected start to a morning, and much more... Thus, I would like to thank Martina G, Christabel, Glenn, Julia, and Nicole A for their submissions. In addition, I would like to thank Martina G for her invaluable and expert help with the layout of this eNewsletter.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all 97 of you for choosing to renew your AAM membership or become new members of the AAM! I hope that you enjoy what we have prepared for you.

Stephanie

AAM Secretary



The AAM 2022-2025 committee, from left to right: Dr Stephanie Mifsud (Secretary), Dr Petramay Attard Cortis (Education & Events Coordinator), Dr Nandor Kosik (Treasurer), Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta (President), Dr Daniel Farrugia (Vice-President), Dr Martina Gerada (Trainee Representative 2022-2023).

A MESSAGE FROM THE TRAINEE REPRESENTATIVE

DR MARTINA GERADA MD

HI EVERYONE!

I am writing this short message as this year's Trainee Representative. My term started last October and it will last for one full year.



I represent a 37-strong trainee cohort - an extremely rewarding position! My main role is to be the link between all the trainees, the AAM and the department. I attend committee meetings, give my input on behalf of the trainees and present any issues or suggestions by the trainees.

The department's trainee count has reached an unprecedented peak, presenting us with new challenges. Nevertheless, it fills us with hope, as these trainees represent the promising future of our remarkable department. As part of my responsibilities, I am dedicated to ensuring that we maximize the benefits of our training program while actively contributing to the overall improvement of the department.

Furthermore, my efforts extend beyond the current group of trainees. Maintaining high standards and fostering motivation among other junior doctors to join our department is equally crucial to me.

My plan for this year is simple yet demanding. I intend to build upon the excellent work done by previous trainee representatives and ensure that all current trainees are content with their training program and overall work experience. I will be working hand in hand with the rest of the AAM committee to achieve this. Together, we will strive to create a positive and fulfilling environment for all trainees.

Lastly, I will be present to listen to new ideas, discuss any suggestions and tackle any issues. So, if you see me around, do not think twice to approach me!

Martina

Trainee Representative 2022-2023

AAM PAST EVENTS RECAP

Welcome to the New Trainees Cohort 2022-2027



On October 3, 2022, at 12:30, a brief meet and greet event took place in the departmental courtyard to welcome the new trainees. During the event, the purpose and mission of the AAM were emphasized to the trainees after a round of introductions and some refreshments.

Donation of New Garden Furniture

In line with our commitment to ensuring the well-being of our members, the AAM took its first step by donating new garden furniture for the departmental backyard on October 6, 2022. We extend our gratitude to the members who generously helped transport the furniture and to the skilled MDH handyman staff for their expert assembly.

The staff's delight was evident from the very first day they started using the new furniture!









World Anaesthesia Day (WAD) - 15 & 16th October 2022

The AAM is also committed to increasing the public's awareness and knowledge about our speciality and our indispensable work and expertise in various healthcare settings. Thus, for WAD, the AAM planned a number of activities, including setting up an interactive stand and poster in the foyer at MDH, which was manned by the AAM committee members on both days from 9:30 to 11:30.





The event was advertised on the MDH Facebook page



A sweet treat, sponsored by the AAM, for all anaesthetists on WAD in the department

Press Release for World Anaesthesia Day

In order, to reach a wider target audience, AAM released a press release which was picked up by a few news hubs including the Malta Independent. In addition, Dr Daniel Farrugia, AAM VP, was interviewed by Ruth Amaira for TVM news.



Maltese anaesthetists celebrate World Anaesthesia Day

BY GOZO NEWS · OCTOBER 12, 2022

Email item Print item

President of the Association of Anaesthesiologists of Malta (AAM) Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta, and the committee have acknowledged the hard work done by anaesthetists during the Covid pandemic by marking World Anaesthesia Day.



Home > Newspaper > Lifestyle & Culture > World Anaesthesia Day

World Anaesthesia Day

Sunday, 16 October 2022, 07:43 Last update: about 11 months ago

Dr Stephanie Mifsud, Dr Nandor Kosik, Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, Dr Mario Zerafa (deputy chairperson, Department of Anaesthesia, Mater Dei Hospital), Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta (AAM president), Dr Daniel Farrugia and Dr Martina Gerada

World Anaesthesia Day is celebrated on 16 October and this year we are commemorating the 176th anniversary of the first successful public demonstration of



Dr Daniel Farrugia, AAM VP, being interviewed by Ruth Amaira for TVM News on 22.10.22

The Malta Independent Article

Gozo News Article

TVM News Interview

Annual General Meeting 2022

The AGM was held on the 11th November 2022 in the department, and was well attended by AAM members. It was followed by a informal Social Event.





Christmas Event



The AAM's Christmas event was organised by Dr Petramay Attard Cortis and the Education & Events subcommittee on the 4th of January 2023 at AX The Palace in Sliema.





Focus on Paediatric Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Event (PAC)

The AAM's first Educational Event for 2023 was the Focus on Paediatric Anaesthesia and Intensive Care, held on Saturday 25th February at the Hilltop Gardens in Naxxar.

This educational event was an excellent opportunity for multidisciplinary learning. The programme included an exciting mix of presentations; parallel interactive workshops targeted at different healthcare professionals including one on Basic Knowledge, another on Advanced Anaesthesia, and the third on Intensive Care Medicine; as well as an Ask the Expert session.

The faculty included AAM members and paediatric anaesthesiologists Dr Mario Zerafa, Dr Johann Scicluna, Dr Nenad Jovanovic and Dr Nándor Kósik from Mater Dei Hospital; neonatologist Dr Ryan Farrugia from Mater Dei Hospital; and paediatric anaesthesiologist Dr Andrew Grech who travelled specifically to join the faculty for this educational event from the UK.





This activity was organized and hosted by Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, the AAM's Education and Events Coordinator, together with the support of Dr Julia Aquilina and Dr Martina Cilia, who are members of the AAM's Education and Events Subcommittee. On the day, the team was also assisted by the AAM Trainee Representative, Dr Martina Gerada.

At event closure, Dr Attard Cortis hosted a well-received Quiz, which concluded the event on a positive and interactive note! The closing address was delivered by AAM President, Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta. The feedback received for AAM's Focus on Paediatric Anaesthesia and Intensive Care - an Educational Event was very positive and encouraging, with many colleagues expressing interest in attending similar events, with an emphasis on multidisciplinary learning and networking.



Team Building Event - Escape Room

The Education & Events Subcommittee organised an AAM team-building activity at Can You Escape? - Escape Rooms Malta Fgura in March 2023. A big well done to all the participants since they all managed to escape using teamwork, collaboration, task prioritisation and a lot of situational awareness! In other words, just a normal day at the office! The event was then followed by a quick bite and some drinks at a local snack bar.





ReACT Course

The second edition of the tremendously successful educational course organised by the AAM, "ReACT" was held on the 15th of April at Salini Resort.

After the success of last year, 63 medical doctors from a range of different specialities and at different levels of their training attended this highly anticipated course. The medical doctors were trained by our 17-strong faculty team ranging from senior trainees, resident specialists, consultants and practice nurses from our department.

The candidates were trained in various aspects related to anaesthesia, critical care and pain management. Such topics included core airway skills, acute pain management, assessing the critically ill patient in the ward, the breathless patient, tracheostomies, non-technical skills including handover and many more!

Big thank you to all the AAM Education & Events members who were involved with the organisation of this event, to all the faculty and to all the candidates that attended this event!

We look forward to organising similar educational courses in the future.



Members from the ReACT Faculty





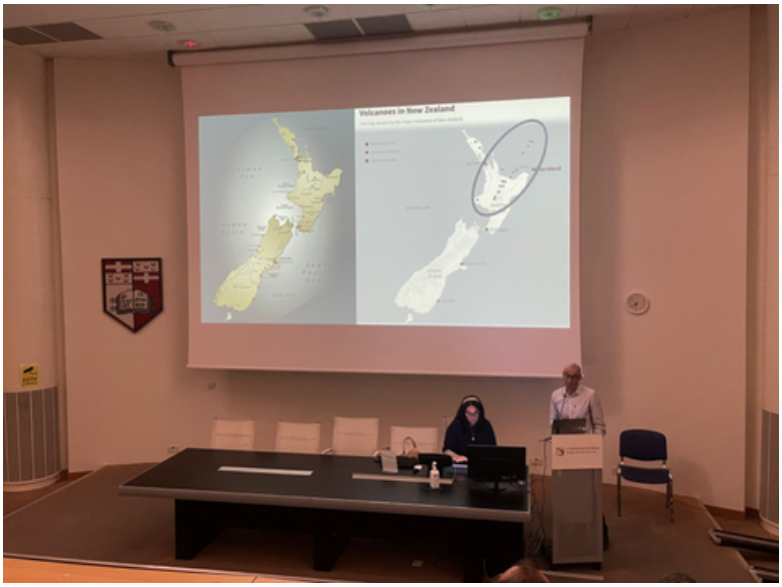
Joint Department of Anaesthesia - AAM CME lecture



A Joint Department of Anaesthesia - AAM CME Lecture was organised by AAM Secretary Dr S. Mifsud and held on Thursday 20th April 2023 in the South Auditorium at MDH. The speaker, Dr Julian Dimech FRCA, FANZCA, is an anaesthetist from Malta who has undergone training in the UK.

After settling down in Auckland, New Zealand he obtained his Fellowship of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (FANZCA) and has been practising anaesthesia for the past 13 years. He has extensive experience in the provision of regional anaesthesia, the management of morbidly and super morbidly obese patients as well as obstetrics and perioperative medicine.

He shared his insights concerning the handling of mass casualties and burn victims in the aftermath of the 2019 Whakaari/White Island Volcanic eruption, along with his expertise in managing overweight patients, particularly within the field of obstetrics. Attendees were provided with refreshments during the occasion.



Bike Ride



A bike ride from Mater Dei Hospital to Ta' Qali, was organised by the AAM as one of the sustainability initiatives planned for this year. Well done to Dr Nándor Kósik, Dr Julia Aquilina and the sustainability subcommittee for the organisation of this event.

Euroanaesthesia 2023 and the AAM Sustainability Booth

A number of AAM committee members attended the ESAIC (European Society of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care) 2023 Congress in Glasgow and actively participated in numerous meetings, networked and established contacts that we hope will bring new opportunities for all our members. In addition, Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta delivered a number of lectures and Dr Bernice Spiteri presented poster presentations.

National Anaesthesiologists Societies Committee (NASC) Meeting 2nd June

AAM President, Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta, attended this meeting. After receiving updates from the European Society of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care (ESAIC) president Eduardo de Robertis, World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) president Dr Wayne Morris, European Board of Anaesthesiologists (EBA) president Prof. Olegs Sabelnikovs and NASC president Prof. Federico Bilotta, the NASC representatives came up with work proposals for the coming year. Malta will be working on the following initiatives

1. *Fatigue project* – publishing the results of the fatigue survey sent to European Anaesthesiologists and introducing measures to mitigate the effects of work-related fatigue
2. *Sustainability project* – sustainability sub-committee set up recently
3. *Implementing the European Training Requirement* - updating the training document in 2024

EBA Meeting 3rd June

During this meeting, Dr Stephanie Mifsud participated in the Quality and Safety subcommittee. Discussions on the most pressing safety issues affecting our individual countries and any solutions that can be implemented ensued. In addition, updates from EBA president Prof. Olegs Sabelnikovs, NASC president Prof. Federico Bilotta, ESAIC president Eduardo de Robertis and the Chairpersons of the standing subcommittees were also presented.

Meeting with the WFSA

The AAM is also a member of the WFSA and during this congress we had the opportunity to meet up with the WFSA President, Secretary, CEO and Membership Officer in a very productive meeting. The WFSA's mission and goals for 2023-2028 in which they aim to Educate, Advocate and Collaborate as well as the ways in which the AAM members can benefit from the WFSA'S courses, and scholarships were discussed. The WFSA recognises that anaesthesiologists are a vulnerable workforce and thus ensuring their well-being is essential. We were strongly encouraged to participate in the WFSA General Assembly which will be held at the 2024 WFSA Congress. Feel free to check out the WFSA website at: https://wfsahq.org/.



WFSA Meeting at Euroanaesthesia 2023

Manning of the AAM Sustainability Booth by Dr Nandor Kósik, Dr Bernice Spiteri and Dr Julia Aquilina

The AAM booth had a special focus on sustainability. Prior to the trip the AAM's sustainability subcommittee organised events and introduced measures in favour of sustainability such as the AAM bike ride, reusable scrub caps and the introduction of bins for recycling in the department as well as in the theatre. We used this opportunity to promote the AAM and Malta as well as network with other associations and specialists in sustainability, with the aim of opening up new opportunities for our association and learning new ways to improve our theatre environment. Additionally, the ESAIC has just signed the Glasgow Declaration on sustainability in Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care.





AAM Booth at Euroanaesthesia 2023



Congratulations are in order for Dr Mario Zerafa who received the FESAIC at the Euroanaesthesia 2023

EDAIC Part II held for the first time in Malta

Following the AAM agreement with ESAIC, the EDAIC was held for the first time locally on the 17-18 of June 2023. Dr Stephen Sciberras, also an AAM member, hosted the event, while also being an examiner together with Dr Mario Zerafa, Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta and Dr Petramay Attard Cortis. Of course, congratulations are in order for Dr Steve Bugeja, Dr Kristina Ellul and Dr Ben Thornton, who successfully became EDAIC diplomates.



Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta and Dr Toma, a Swiss examiner, during the EDAIC Part 2 examination held in Malta last June.



Left to Right: Dr Stephen Sciberras, Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta, Dr Steve Bugeja, Dr Kristina Ellul, Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, Dr Ben Thornton and Dr Mario Zerafa.

Presentation & Public Speaking Workshop

The AAM's Presentation and Public Speaking Workshop for anaesthetic trainees was held on the 4th of August 2023 at Learning Works in Qormi.

This educational event was targeted at local anaesthetic trainees, whose professional development is enhanced by gaining presentation and public speaking skills. Communicating in formal academic settings is important for anaesthetists, and trainees will be able to use these skills at the upcoming 1st AAM National Anaesthetic Trainees Academic Showcase (ANATAS) planned for the 30th of September 2023.

The workshop programme was based on experiential learning, with participants practising presentation skills using both PowerPoint slides and flipcharts in a creative manner to present academic topics. Each participant received individual, written feedback on both presentations, supplemented with verbal individual debriefing, and vicarious learning through group reflection. Learning was further encouraged through one faculty-moderated brainstorming session and one interactive lecture.

This activity was organized and led by Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, the AAM's Education and Events Coordinator, and supported by the AAM's Secretary, Dr Stephanie Mifsud, as the second faculty member.

The feedback received for AAM's Presentation & Public Speaking Workshop was encouraging, with all candidates stating that the knowledge and experience gained will be useful in their future presentations, and all candidates would recommend this workshop to their anaesthetic trainee colleagues.





Presentation and Public Speaking Workshop Faculty



EXPLORING OUR HISTORY

Hospitals in Malta: the Sacra Infermeria

DR GLENN PAUL ABELA MD MRCS DESA



The Order of St John knows its origins to an infirmary founded in Jerusalem, in the late eleventh century, to take care of sick pilgrims visiting Christian holy sites. It was years later that it morphed into a chivalric military institution whose members were drawn from European noble families to take up arms and defend the Latin Kingdoms in the Middle East against the Saracens.

Despite the transformation, the Order never let go of its duty to care for the infirm. Its knights quickly became known as the "Hospitallers", and after the expulsion of Christian rulers from the Middle East, they set up a hospital wherever they had their headquarters. Soon after their arrival in Malta in November 1530, the Order opened its infirmar in Birgu and in addition, the Italian knights ran a small clinic from their auberge in Birgu too. Since then the term "berġa" has been used to refer to district clinics.

When the Great Siege of 1565 was over, the Knights set out to build a new city on the Sciberras peninsula to re-fortify the island after the destruction wrought about by the invading Ottomans. Grand Master de Valette laid down the foundation stone on March 26, 1566, and the city was christened "Valletta" in his honour. Eventually, the Order's headquarters were transferred from Birgu to Valletta five years later in March 1571.

One of the first public buildings the Knights planned for Valletta was a hospital. In 1574 Grand Master Jean de la Cassier commissioned the planning of a hospital that eventually became known as the "Sacra Infermeria", the Holy Infirmary, and construction started in earnest. The architect remains unknown but it is commonly attributed to Girolamo Cassar, the distinguished Maltese architect and military engineer who worked extensively in Valletta. Located in the southeastern part of the city close to Fort St Elmo, the Sacra Infermeria was completed four years later. Large extensions were added later on in 1583, 1662 and 1712. In 1676 Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner established a school of anatomy and surgery annexed to it and the Order regularly sent Maltese physicians to Italy and France at its own expense for them to complete their medical studies. The University of Malta Medical School still bears Cotoner's coat of arms as its emblem.

The Sacra Infermeria offered shelter for all men irrespective of class or creed, and for a very long time during the Knights' rule it was known as one of the finest hospitals in Europe, where patients had their own single-beds, had linen changed often and were served in silver cutlery. It could house around nine hundred patients and its largest ward, at almost 155 metres in length, was one of the longest halls in Europe at the time. Visitors often remained in awe at the whole facility and wrote glowing remarks in their records. Edward Brown, an English merchant visiting the Mediterranean in 1676, wrote, "the great hospital is a noble building, to speak the truth, the very glory of Malta."

Things took a turn for the worse in the late eighteenth century, when the Order's fortunes nosedived and it became hard to properly finance the Sacra Infermeria. When Napoleon invaded Malta in June 1798 and the Order capitulated without resistance, the islands were passed on to the French. The Sacra Infermeria changed its name but not its function: the hospital now became known as the "Hospital Central". The same thing happened when the British took over after two years and Malta became a crown colony. In 1800 it became the "Station Hospital", and its location so close to the harbour made it ideal to receive injured or sick people transferred from onboard ships. During the First World War, it formed part of the vast network of military hospitals on the island that provided care for hundreds of war casualties.

The Station Hospital remained operational until 1920. The Sacra Infermeria became the Police Depot and continued serving as the police headquarters until the Second World War. Once the air bombings intensified, the building was vacated and it unfortunately sustained extensive damage during the war. Parts of it became a military command centre and remained so until 1950. It subsequently fulfilled a variety of roles, including a children's theatre and an examination hall, and a restoration project was then undertaken in 1978. The Sacra Infermeria shed its medical role for good and became instead the Mediterranean Conference Centre.



Mediterranean Conference Centre

ATTENDING ESAIC COURSES

Teach the Teachers Course

DR CHRISTABEL MIZZI MD MRCP DESA EDIC

I feel very privileged to have attended the Teach the Teachers Course held in Heraklion, Crete in October 2022 and Porto, Portugal in April 2023. This course is organised and sponsored in its entirety by the ESAIC.

Apart from being given the opportunity to visit these exceptionally beautiful locations, I have also had the chance to meet excellent faculty members who have taught me a great deal and shared a wealth of knowledge. Of note, two of the faculty members are members of our Department of Anaesthesia in Malta as well as members of the AAM Committee. This course allowed me to appreciate that medical teaching and education go beyond a couple of lectures and simulations. It enabled me to understand the many techniques one can use in order to disseminate knowledge to adult learners. It also helped me become more systematic in the way I design teaching and the importance of self-reflection. In addition, the social aspect of the course was excellent since it allowed me to connect with a group of anaesthetists from different parts of Europe with differing cultures and a variety of practices. Overall, this experience was very rewarding, and I look forward to implementing the knowledge gained in this course into my practice locally.



TTT faculty members: Dr AnneMarie Camilleri Podesta and Dr Petramay Attard Cortis;
TTT participants: Dr Glenn Paul Abela, Dr Stephanie Mifsud and Dr Christabel Mizzi.

Advanced Patient Safety Course

DR STEPHANIE MIFSUD BSC MD DESAIC

Patient safety has always been close to my heart and I have always strived to enhance both my knowledge and expertise in order to ensure that my daily clinical practice safeguarded patients from adverse events.

Thus, I decided to attend the first Advanced Patient Safety Course (APSC) organised by the ESAIC in September 2022. The ESAIC APSC is a live course designed to teach vital patient safety strategies for acute settings. The APSC forms a key part of the Safer Care to Save Lives Programme, an ESAIC Patient Safety Education programme. Healthcare professionals attending 100% of the ASPC and who pass the course assessment will hold the ESAIC Advanced Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Patient Safety Certificate. The AAM plans to eventually start holding this course locally, once an agreement is signed with the ESAIC.

Dr Karen Torpiano, who has attended the March 2023 course, and myself will be part of the faculty and will be attending an APSC TTT course later on in the year.



A WORLD AWAY: THE NEPALESE ADVENTURE

DR JULIA AQUILINA MD



Last Autumn, I had the pleasure of experiencing the beautiful country of Nepal, and its Himalayan mountains. Although I would not describe the holiday as leisurely, I surely learnt a few life lessons, as well as a newfound confidence in myself. The group consisted of four Maltese, including myself, and our aim was to climb the mountain Mera Peak (at 6546 metres - the highest trekking peak), followed by a week of voluntary work with the Sisters of Mother Theresa in Kathmandu.

The trip, of course, started with a bang. A delayed flight, lost luggage, and having my HST interview whilst I was on my way from the airport, stuck in a minivan in Kathmandu traffic (which is really an experience in itself), with a flower wreath around my neck (as Dr Scicluna put it - added to the atmosphere).

Having survived Kathmandu traffic, we proceeded to survive what is known as the most dangerous flight in the world - the flight to Lukla airport, in the Himalayas, known for its notoriously short runway. The airport and flight experience felt more like catching an Arriva bus, back in the good old days, with views I will never forget.

The following 12 days consisted of some pretty intense trekking. With a whopping 1000-metre climb on just the second day, and one of us already suffering from altitude sickness, I knew this was not going to be the leisurely hike we signed up for. Each day we would hike to our next destination, a wooden lodge with plastic-covered windows and a small stove (sometimes fed with animal manure) in the dining area for warmth. If we were lucky, we'd be offered a 'hot' shower. However, a shower was not advised until after we summited our mountain!

On the 23rd of November, we swallowed our mountain sickness medication, put on our harnesses and crampons, and at 2:30am, left Mera high camp (5800m) to attempt reaching the summit. With blood oxygen saturations of only 55%, it was impossible to walk more than a few steps over the Mera glacier without stopping to catch our breath. With a lot of patience and encouragement from our Sherpa, who despite winds of 95 km/hr and a temperature of -25 degrees, still believed we could summit - and summit we did! By 8:30am, all the group had summited together at the peak of 6546 metres. At that moment, I was overwhelmed with emotion (hypoxia being a large contributor) and of course, exhaustion. Being cautious of crevasses and other dangers at that altitude, we got off the glacier by 15:00, and reached our lodge (4950m) at 17:00.





A mandatory lesson to be learnt when climbing a mountain is that there is no going fast. The number of countless steps ahead is irrelevant, but one must simply focus on making each single step. This was the only way we made it to the peak. Reaching our next lodge was a celebration in itself, and we celebrated each victory. To add to this, our Sherpa would only give us details of the following day's trek after we would have eaten dinner. This is a lesson I can relate to my everyday life. Be it studying for an exam, or dealing with an overwhelming to-do list, taking things one step at a time makes life more doable and enjoyable! So, I have learnt to focus more on the now, and less on the 'what's next'. Personally, it is extraordinary for me to have managed to climb this mountain. This also gave me a new found confidence and amazement to what our bodies are capable of doing.

Following the journey on the mountain, back in Kathmandu, we spent our last week in Nepal doing voluntary work with the Sisters of Mother Theresa. We helped out at a home for women with disabilities. These included physical and psychiatric illnesses. The work we did included helping out with chores, spending time with the residents, reviewing their psychiatric medications, installing a new water filter system, installing water heaters, and buying medications. We were all amazed with the generous contributions and donations we received, and so were the Sisters! They were also grateful and impressed with the amount of work we managed to get done in just one week. One thing that struck me from the time spent with the residents was, how happy and joyful they were, and how everyone contributed to the work and chores despite their limitations.

Nepal, I will definitely be back, but until then, I am definitely going to enjoy my hot showers and Western meals!




ERA PEAK CLIMBING (6470M)
27 October 2022
we made it

AN UNEXPECTED MORNING

DR NICOLE ATTARD MD

It was a rainy Saturday morning on the 26th of November 2022, struggling to get out of bed and get ready for work when I was startled awake by a huge bang followed by an even bigger one. Outside people were questioning the blast, however, it was clear that a fireworks factory close to our house had exploded.

I quickly put on my uniform and made my way to the location, not really sure where I was going and what I was expecting to find. On my way there I was mentally preparing myself for the worst but I felt it was my responsibility to go help, as a doctor and all the more as a trainee in anaesthesia and intensive care.

A crowd had gathered close to the area. I approached a civil protection officer and introduced myself. A look of relief washed over his face and he quickly communicated with the rest of his team that they had a doctor on site. I was handed protective wear and we approached the scene carefully. Civil protection officers were checking out the area using a drone, prior to entering. It was immediately clear that there was one casualty dead on site and there was a second victim who we didn't have much information about at the time. In the meantime, we could hear ongoing small explosions, but I was assured that we were safe. I was handed a trauma pack as heavy as me and asked to wait while they brought out the injured victim.

I was both amazed and baffled when I saw a male in his mid-forties approach, walking and not overtly injured apart from some visible scratches on his face. I obtained a short history from him, where he recounted the events leading up to the explosion, in which he had lost his friend – news which he confirmed.

In the interim, the pre-hospital team led by Dr Michael Spiteri arrived, and I was asked to escort the patient to an ambulance for a full primary assessment. On our walk to the ambulance, we could observe big pieces of shredded metal. It was clear that they were parts of a container which had been used as a store for the fireworks.

Once at the ambulance site the patient was fully assessed and deemed to be stable for transfer to hospital for tests and imaging. He was re-united with his distressed family who were dealing with severe emotional shock and required medical assistance themselves.

I had never considered pre-hospital medicine as a possible career niche and it had never crossed my mind that I could find myself in a situation similar to this one. It was an eye-opening experience in more ways than one. On a personal level, it was an empowering encounter, where I was out of my comfort zone, outside of hospital, with no anaesthetic senior support on site if it were to be needed. Furthermore, I was able to use my medical background to be of help where truly needed, not only dealing with patients, but also distraught relatives.



A plume of smoke is seen rising from the fireworks factory in Kirkop
Photo taken from the Times of Malta.

FUTURE CONFERENCES & COURSES

6th World Congress of Regional Anaesthesia & Pain Medicine (40th ESRA Annual Congress)	6th to 9th September 2023 Paris, France	https://*esraeurope.org/meeting/6th-world-congress-on-regional-anesthesia-pain-medicine/*
13th Congress of the European Pain Federation (EFIC)	20th to 22nd September 2023 Budapest, Hungary	*https://europeanpainfederation.eu/efic2023/*
ESICM Lives 36th Annual Congress	21st to 25th October 2023 Milan, Italy	*https://www.esicm.org/events/36th-annual-congress*
AAGBI	Throughout the year	*https://anaesthetists.org/Home/Education-events/Find-an-event*
Malta Resuscitation Council (MRC)	Throughout the year	*http://www.resus.org.mt*
7th European Airway Management Society (EAMS) Congress	5th to 7th October 2023 Lago Maggiore, Italy	*https://www.eac2023.org/home/*
Resuscitation 2023	2nd to 4th November 2023 Barcelona, Spain	*https://www.resuscitation.eu/*
Euroneuro 2023	5th to 7th November 2023 Brussels, Belgium	*https://www.euroneuro.eu/*
Anaesthesia & Critical Care	14th to 15th November 2023 Excel London, United Kingdom	*https://www.accconference.co.uk/*
Annual Scientific Meeting of the DAS 2023	29th November to 1st December 2023 Birmingham, United Kingdom	*https://www.emedevents.com/c/medical-conferences-2023/annual-scientific-meeting-of-the-difficult-airway-society-das-2023*

UPCOMING AAM EVENTS

29 SEPTEMBER

SCIENCE IN THE CITY

AAM WILL BE PRESENTING THE ANAESTHETIC ROOM SIMULATION AND MUCH MORE!

30 SEPTEMBER

1ST ANATAS (AAM NATIONAL ANAESTHETIC TRAINEES ACADEMIC SHOWCASE) & SUMMER EVENT

SPECIAL SHOUTOUTS

DR DAVID GATT
Successfully obtained his PhD from the University of Nottingham

DR STEPHEN SCIBERRAS
Successfully obtained his PhD from the University of Malta

DR KEITH BORG XUEREB & DR GRETA MATTOCKS
Successfully finished their training programme in 2022

DR STEVE BUGEJA, DR KRISTINA ELLUL & DR BEN THORNTON
Successfully became EDAIC diplomates in 2023

TRAINEES
All trainees who have successfully progressed to their next year of training

A HELPING HAND: PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

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For more information, you can reach them on:
25456900/1 or email psychologyreferal.mdh@gov.mt or paul.sciberras@gov.mt

Alternatively, you can find more information on the MDH Portal at https://health.intra.gov.mt/mdh/psychology/SitePages/Home.aspx or follow their Facebook page on https://www.facebook.com/psychologymaterdei/.

F'mumenti ta' diffikulta', uri kuraġġ u fittex l-għajnuna!
In times of difficulty, take the step and reach out!

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We join forces to improve the well-being of health professionals.

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www.fightingfatiguetogether.eu

This is a publication brought to you by the Association of Anaesthesiologists of Malta (AAM)



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