

BEYOND THE MASK

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



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DR DANIEL FARRUGIA MD DEAA EDIC

>>> DEAR COLLEAGUES,

It is indeed a privilege to address you within my capacity as Vice President of the AAM and I would like to welcome you all to this second edition of the AAM newsletter.



We often take for granted our professional role as anaesthetists as we work within the multidisciplinary team and I wish to share my thoughts on the very identity of our speciality, especially with our young trainees who have recently embarked on this professional journey.

Anaesthetists have unique skills that not only permit them to rob the patient of consciousness, but also to potentially affect, if not take over, every major organ system of the patient's body. Hence, the great responsibility and privilege attached to our speciality needs to be reflected within the dynamic of the multidisciplinary team. We are the patient's ultimate protector.

Our role is laden with responsibility and one that we should never take for granted. However, our focus on the patient's physical welfare at times makes us forget the normally unmeasurable factors, including the patient's state of mind and mental well-being.

It helps to occasionally reflect on what a patient is feeling as they come under the knife. Kindness and empathy can be as important as clinical competence and are essential to achieving excellence. A gentle word helps create a human connection and validates the patient under our care.

Indeed, the application of knowledge and skills in a humane manner within the context of a multidisciplinary team is essential to achieving clinical excellence in anaesthesia. Perhaps, though, the most crucial quality of the anaesthetist is vigilance. Vigilance is what helps us detect and interpret situational cues from multiple sources of information. It is what allows us to adapt to changing situations and anticipate future events and is a most important component of situational awareness. Vigilance goes beyond the use of technology but also rests heavily on the anaesthetist's clinical judgement and experience. It is a skill and can be sharpened.

These are amongst the qualities that we attune to in order to aspire to become better anaesthetists and better doctors. It is an ongoing journey; one which we hope our Association may accompany you along the way.

Daniel Farrugia



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DR STEPHANIE MIFSUD BSC MD DESAIC MSC

»»» DEAR AAM MEMBERS AND COLLEAGUES,

On behalf of the AAM committee, I would like to **THANK YOU** for the overwhelming support and encouraging feedback received for the first issue of the AAM's eNewsletter published in August 2023. We had over 350 reads, and almost 400 contacts from over 10 countries across the world, including the UK, USA, Ukraine, Sweden, and Czechia. The editorial team has strived to produce an even better second issue full of updates, news, and useful information pertaining to Anaesthesia, Pain and ICM.

In the previous six months the AAM has organised a number of well-received events, including a joint CME event with the department, the manning of the Science in the City 2023 stand by our trainee members, the first ANATAS (AAM's National Anaesthetic Trainees Academic Showcase) and end-of-summer Event, the 2023 AGM, and the Christmas Event. Apart from organising its own courses and events, the AAM has also supported the local iteration of the ESICM's ICU Fundamentals course spearheaded brilliantly by Dr. Christabel Mizzi and is in talks to offer support for other relevant local courses.

The events being planned for the coming year, include the AAM's Focus on Obstetric Anaesthesia and Intensive Care in February 2024, the ReACT course in April 2024, a Team building event, and the second ANATAS.

In the current issue, you will find the following articles submitted by our members: an inspirational article on the tenets of anaesthetic practice by our Vice-President Daniel Farrugia, a voluntary trip to the Philippines, research into fatigue and anaesthetists, trainees' accounts of participating in the ANATAS, and much more... Thus, I would like to thank Adrienne, Anne Marie, Christabel, Daniel, Emma, John, Julia, Juliet, Kristina D., and Rebecca for their excellent submissions. Again, my sincere thanks go to Martina G. for her continued support and expertise with the co-editing and layout of this eNewsletter.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all 105 of you who have chosen to renew your AAM membership for 2024 or have become members for the first time. If you have not joined yet, you are still in time! To become AAM members please click on: <https://forms.gle/y8VkXs7jHZeBkPE8A> or scan the QR code below (*payment details can be found in the registration form*);



I sincerely hope that you enjoy what we have prepared for you. Happy Reading!

Stephanie
AAM Secretary



The AAM 2022-2025 committee (from left to right); Dr Stephanie Mifsud (Secretary), Dr Nandor Kosik (Treasurer), Dr Petramay Attard Cortis (Education & Events Coordinator), Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta (President), Dr Daniel Farrugia (Vice-President), Dr Adrienne Zerafa Simler (Trainee Representative 2023-2024).

A MESSAGE FROM THE TRAINEE REPRESENTATIVE

DR ADRIENNE ZERAFA SIMLER MD

»»» DEAR TRAINEES

I hope this message finds you well. First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude for entrusting me with the role of your trainee representative. It is a role that I do not take lightly, and I am truly thankful for the confidence you have placed in me to advocate for our collective needs and concerns.

As we start this year together, I firmly believe that trainees are the future of our specialty. Our training demands unwavering commitment, continuous learning, and excellence. I am committed to building on the work of my predecessors, collaborating with our esteemed training coordinators on the training committee and the AAM to ensure that your opinions, suggestions, and feedback are acknowledged and addressed.

Drawing from my past experiences in various committees and leadership roles, I feel equipped to represent you effectively. However, I acknowledge that this is a collective effort, and I encourage each of you to actively engage by providing feedback and suggestions. Your active

participation is vital, and I urge you to become active embers of the AAM, joining committees and activities to strengthen the voice and presence of the training body. This involvement will also offer you the chance to familiarise yourself with the dedicated members of the AAM and the training committee, who tirelessly work to enhance the quality of our training.

This year, the AAM is embarking on several projects aimed at providing diverse opportunities for you to enhance your CVs and develop your research, and academic skills. The education and events subcommittee opens calls for enthusiastic individuals to join their team on a yearly basis, and works towards a year filled with enriching academic and social events. Building on the successes of the previous year, I highly recommend your active participation and support of their initiatives.

Before I conclude, I want to extend heartfelt thanks to Martina G. for her dedicated service during the term of 2022/2023. Her hard work and commitment reflected in the trainees' active and enthusiastic participation throughout the year. While I recognise the large shoes I have to fill, I am optimistic about maintaining and even surpassing the level of dedication and participation shown by the trainees. I look forward to a collaborative and successful term, working together to elevate our training experience and strengthen our collective voice.

Best Regards, Adrienne

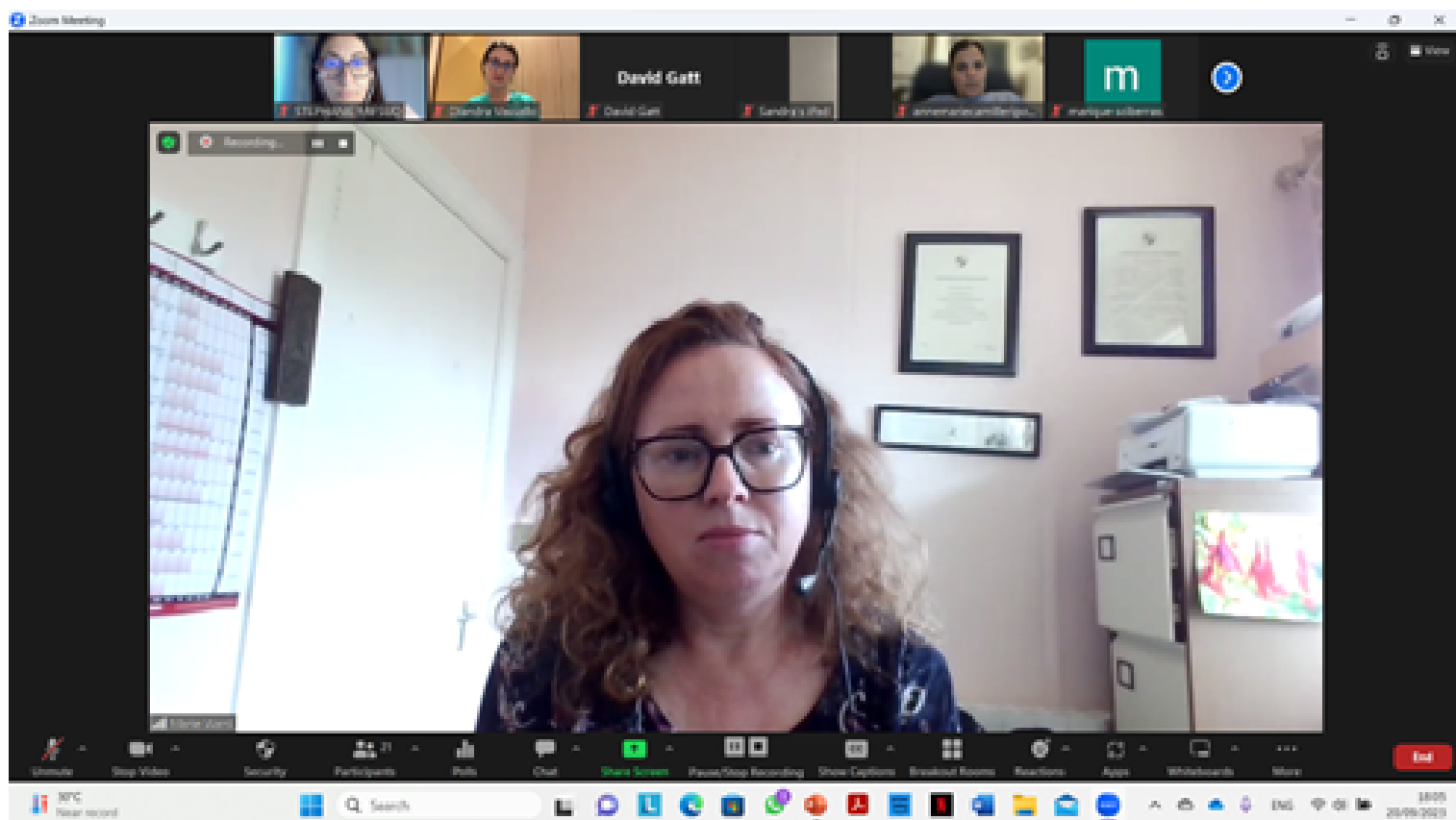


AAM PAST EVENTS RECAP

Distribution of the Scrub Caps

As part of the AAM's sustainability initiative for 2023, Dr Nandor Kosik and Dr Julia Aquilina spearheaded the use of reusable scrub caps. The intention was to reduce usage of disposable scrub caps which have their own environmental impact (it is estimated that 20 theatres utilising reusable scrub caps would replace about 100,000 disposable caps a year). A total of 112 100% carbon neutral caps were ordered and subsidized by the AAM, for anaesthetists and theatre nurses. The caps could also be personalised, which contributes to an increase in name recall and increased name and role introductions during the surgical safety checklist.

Joint AAM and Department of Anaesthesia Online CME with Prof Marie Ward on Human Factors & Safety Nets



A Joint AAM - Department of Anaesthesia virtual CME Lecture was organised by AAM Secretary Dr S. Mifsud and held on Wednesday 20th September 2023 via ZOOM as part of the AAM's World Patient Safety Day 2023 events. The speaker, Prof. Marie Ward is a Quality and Patient Safety Project Manager Children's Health Ireland & Centre for Innovative Human Systems, School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

She holds a Ph.D. in Psychology Human factors from TCD (2005). Post Ph.D. she was based in Aerospace Psychology Research Group (now the Centre for Innovative Human Systems) where she managed and implemented quality and safety improvement initiatives in Aviation, maritime, construction, road and rail industries. In 2014, she moved to the Health System Team in UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery, & Health Systems as a Senior Research Fellow in Health Systems.

She delivered a very interactive session highlighting the implications of Human Factors in our speciality, as well as Team Performance and Safety Nets present in our daily practice, which raised a lot of interest and positive feedback. In addition, Dr. Diandra Vassallo delivered a short presentation on the planned Patient Safety initiatives in our department. The recording of the lecture was kindly uploaded by Dr. Stephen Sciberras on the department's SharePoint. Link below:

<https://govmt.sharepoint.com/sites/MDHAnaesthesia/SitePages/Human-Factors-and-Team-Performance%2C-specifically-on-Safety-Nets.aspx>

Welcome to the New Departmental Trainees - 2023 Cohort

On September 25, 2023, at 07.45, a brief meet and greet took place in the departmental courtyard to welcome the new trainee cohort. During the event, the AAM's purpose and role in ensuring a high-quality training programme, which upon successful completion will allow inclusion in the Maltese specialist register were emphasized to the trainees after a round of introductions and some light refreshments.

AAM at Science in the City Festival 2023

On the 29th of September, under the guidance of Dr Attard Cortis, our previous trainee representative Dr Martina Gerada spearheaded the organisation of AAM's stand, at the popular science festival in Valletta - Science in the City. A group of 8 trainees helped out in the preparation and manning of the stand on the day.

The theme of the festival was "Changemakers" and our main aim was to educate the public on anaesthesia and encourage them to clarify any misconceptions or fears related to our speciality, by providing a firsthand experience of this crucial medical field. We also wanted to inspire curiosity and foster a deeper understanding of the science behind anaesthesia, its importance in medical procedures, and the expertise of the professionals who administer it.



AAM at Science in the City (from left to right); Dr Kristina Duca, Dr Bernice Spiteri, Dr Nicole Attard, Dr Rebecca Galea, Dr Adrienne Zerafa Simler, Dr Martina Gerada, Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, Dr Maria Zammit and Dr Alexandra Munteanu

Our successful stand, was visited by individuals of various ages and backgrounds, featured interactive games, equipment demonstrations, and an Anaesthesia Simulation. The simulation, which attracted large crowds, depicted the pre-, intra and post-operative phases of our speciality. Our team also engaged in very interesting conversations about anaesthesia with the public. The positive feedback received has spurred us to expand this initiative into a bigger project in the future.

Additionally, we administered a brief questionnaire to the public at the stand to gauge their current understanding of anaesthetists. Remarkably, this questionnaire reached over a hundred people, marking it as a resounding success! We are currently exploring the prospect of publishing the questionnaire results in the near future.

Our stand would not have been successful with the group of dedicated and hard-working AAM members who volunteered to help out in planning and manning this stand - THANK YOU!

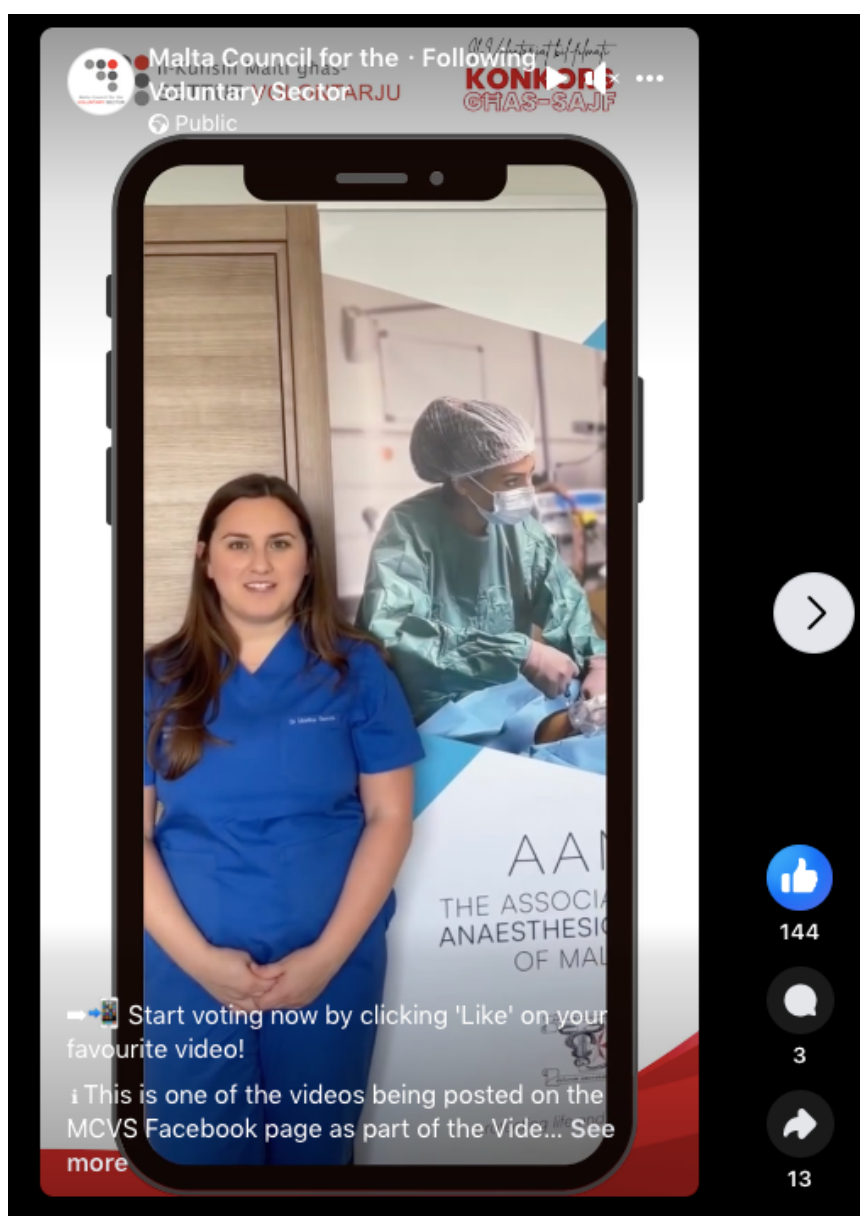


AAM's Participation in the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector - Summer Video Contest

As part of our aim to reach the public audience, a compelling video for a competition with the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) - Summer Video Contest was created by our previous trainee representative - Dr Martina Gerada. This video was shared on the MCVS official Facebook Page and has nearly 150 likes and over 1700 views.

Our participation in this contest allowed the AAM to connect with a broader audience, thereby heightening awareness about anaesthesia. Link to the video:

<https://www.facebook.com/MaltaCouncilVoluntarySector/videos/307281161911748>



Our submission on the MCVS Facebook Page

ANATAS & End-of-Summer Event

The first AAM's National Anaesthetic Trainees Academic Showcase (ANATAS) was held on the 30th of September 2023 at Palazzo Castelletti in Rabat. This Educational Event aimed to showcase the academic work performed by anaesthetic trainees during the course of their speciality training, enhance the oral presentation and public speaking skills of anaesthetic trainees in Malta, and formally recognize and award the best submissions.

Nine submissions were received from eight trainees, and all were orally presented at the 1st ANATAS to a strong audience of anaesthetic trainees, specialists and retired AAM members. The high-quality work and presentations competed for the available prizes in an environment of professional and friendly competition. It was heartening to observe the excellent member turnout, and this was an essential part of the 1st ANATAS' success!



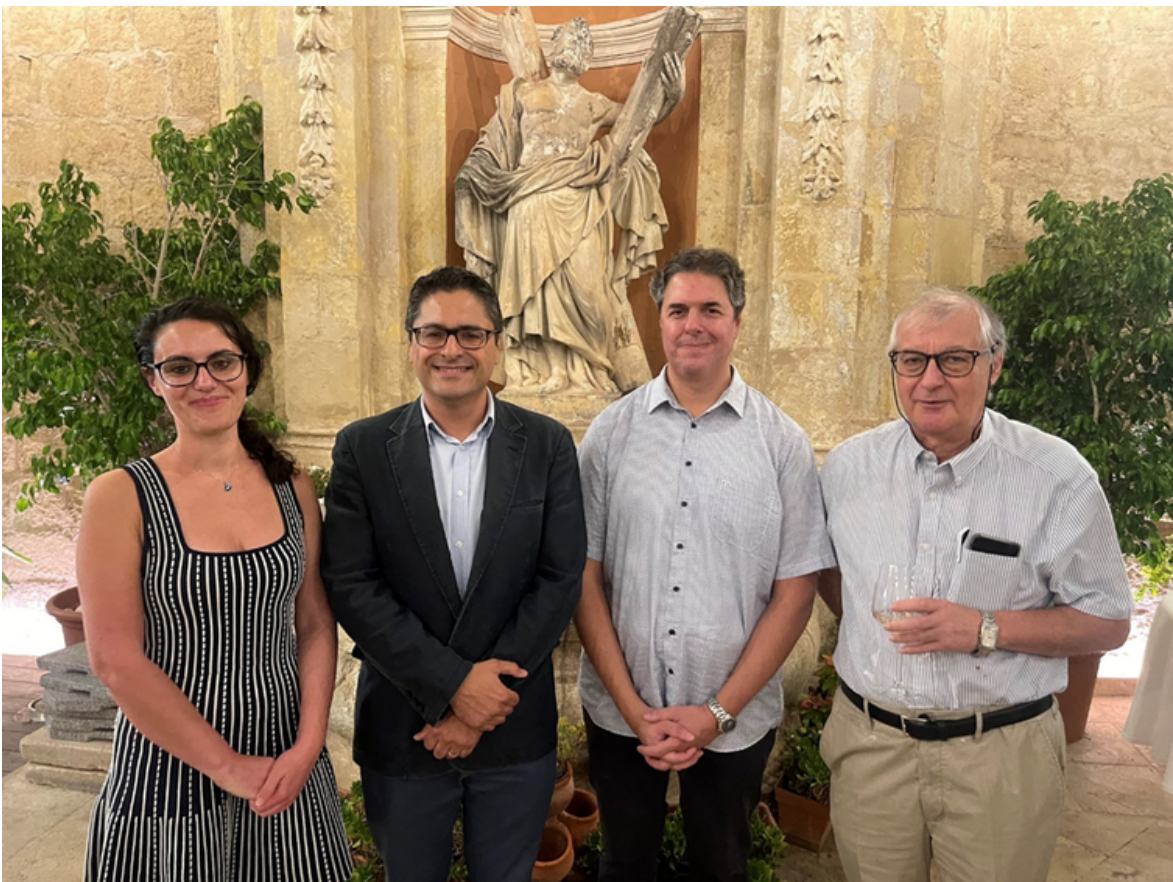
Encouraging attendance from AAM members to the presentations

The judges, Dr Daniel Farrugia (AAM Vice-President), Dr Joseph Zarb Adami (AAM retired member) and Dr Paul Calleja (AAM member representing the Department of Anaesthesia), had a tough job selecting the winning entries. Educational grants were awarded to three submissions.

The first prize went to Dr Rebecca Galea, with her presentation titled "An Audit of the Epidural Analgesia Service at the Central Delivery Suite, Mater Dei Hospital, Malta"; the Second prize was won by Drs Emma Hunter and Kristina Duca for their work, "An Audit on the Consumption of Inhalational Anaesthetic Agents at Mater Dei Hospital"; while the Third prize was awarded to Drs Kristina Duca and Nicole Attard for a presentation on "Obstetric Admissions to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Malta over a six-year period (2016-2021)". Read more on their experiences on page 18.



The eight trainees who submitted their work for the first ANATAS (from left to right); Dr Carla Gauci, Dr John Vella, Dr Rebecca Galea, Dr Juliet Camilleri, Dr Adrienne Zerafa Simler, Dr Emma Hunter, Dr Kristina Duca and Dr Julia Aquilina



The host of the ANATAS Dr Petramay Attard Cortis and the judging panel Dr Daniel Farrugia, Dr Paul Calleja, and Dr Zarb Adami

The presentations were then followed by a lovely dinner to mark the End-of-Summer, during which our members had the opportunity to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the association!

This event was hosted by Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, the AAM's Education and Events Coordinator, with the invaluable support of all the AAM Committee members. Many attendees encouraged the AAM Committee to run the ANATAS as a yearly event... so, see you later in 2024!



AAM Members and our little ones celebrating the 40th Anniversary of our association

World Anaesthesia Day 2023

The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) declared October 16 as World Anaesthesia Day in recognition of W.T.G. Morton's first successful formal demonstration of ether as an anaesthetic back in 1846. The theme for 2023 was “Anaesthesia and Cancer Care”. It aimed to raise awareness on the vital role that anaesthesia plays in the management of cancer and to advocate for the strengthening of anaesthesia services to improve cancer patient outcomes. A small stand was set up in the foyer of MDH and manned by members of our association to raise awareness amongst the public.

Our Vice President, Dr Daniel Farrugia and treasurer, Dr Nandor Kosik, with other AAM members manning the WAD 2023 stand.



Our Treasurer, Dr Nandor Kosik, engaging with a member of the public.



The 2022-2025 AAM committee

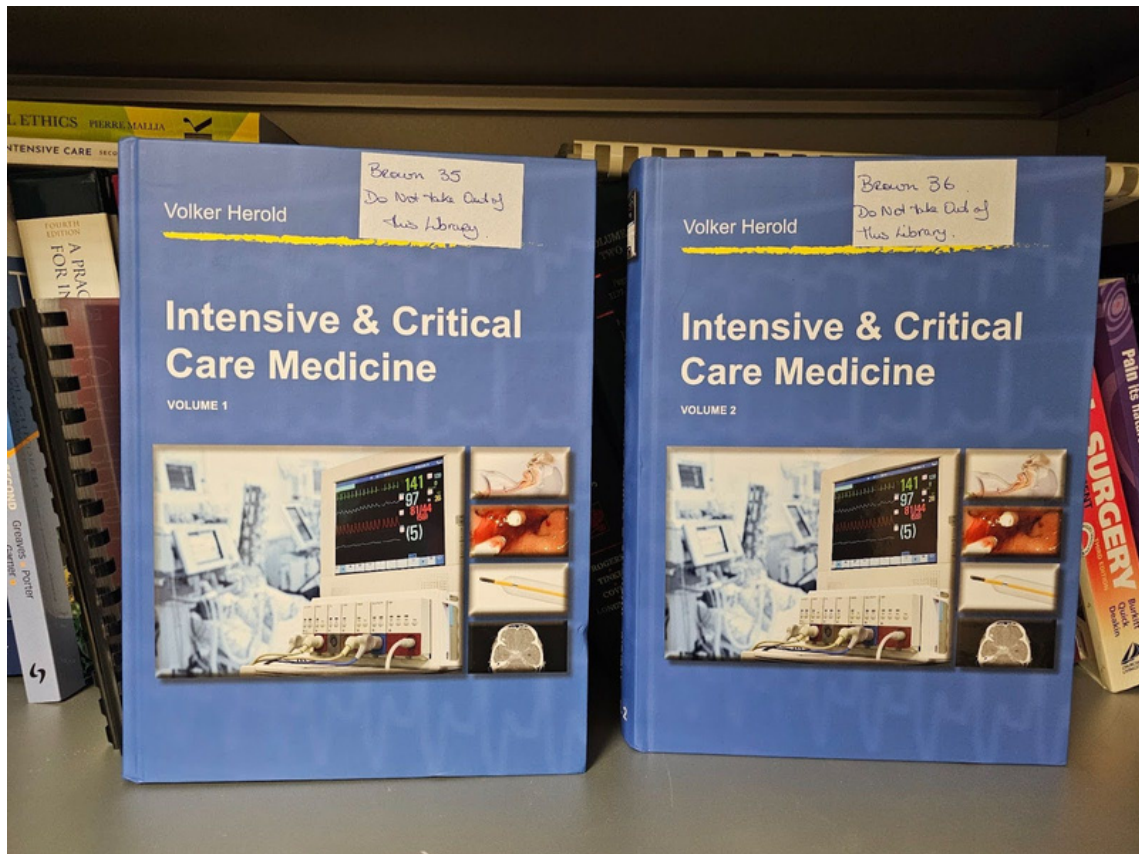
Annual General Meeting 2023

On the 13th of November 2023, the AAM held its Annual General Meeting (AGM), with several esteemed members in attendance. At this AGM, committee members showcased the successful endeavours of the past year. Reports from the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Education and Events Coordinator, and Trainee Representative highlighted the year's accomplishments. Additionally, the vision and forthcoming plans for 2024 were presented. Dr. Adrienne Zerafa Simler was introduced as the incoming Trainee Representative during this AGM. Dr. Martina Gerada, the outgoing Trainee Representative, was thanked for her dedicated efforts and sterling work in the preceding year. Our gratitude extends to all AAM members for their attendance, and unwavering support.



Following the event, attendees enjoyed light refreshments

ICU Books



The AAM has bought and donated the 2 Volumes of the “Intensive and Critical Care Medicine” (ed.2023) by H. Volker to the Anaesthesia Department’s Library.

Christmas Event





The AAM's Christmas event was organised by Dr Petramay Attard Cortis and the Education & Events subcommittee on the 5th of January 2024 at the Bacchus Restaurant in Mdina. It was a pleasant evening allowing for some well-deserved rest and relaxation for the attendees.



FIRST ANATAS TRAINEES' EXPERIENCES

First Prize - Dr Rebecca Galea MD

Looking back on the first edition of the Anaesthetic Trainees Academic Showcase (ANATAS), I primarily want to express my gratitude to AAM for taking the time to organise this event. The space, environment and slick organisation allowed for an excellent opportunity to showcase the projects we as trainees undertake each year; invaluable work with relevant results which may otherwise go unnoticed. The professionalism and eloquence with which everyone delivered their presentations highlighted not only the diligence and dedication amongst the trainees, but also the department's commitment to encouraging research and professional development. I am very grateful for this personal achievement and especially for the collaborative and supportive atmosphere within the anaesthesia department. The showcase also created one of few possibilities for some mingling in a casual setting, with delicious food and drink following the presentations at the end-of-summer AAM event. With all this in mind I want to reiterate my gratitude and I look forward to future editions!

The study I presented was one carried out with Dr. Petramay Attard Cortis and Dr. Glenn Paul Abela in the Central Delivery Suite of Mater Dei Hospital in 2021 and compared standards set by NICE UK and the RCOA stating that the time from when a labouring mother requests analgesia to the time the anaesthetist attends to her should not normally exceed 30 minutes, and must be within one hour in exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the accidental dural puncture (ADP) rate should be less than 1%, and re-site rate during labour less than 15%. Our research showed that the average epidural waiting time in our unit was 34 minutes, there were no reported ADPs, and only 3.5% of epidurals required re-siting. These results fall well within the recommended standard, which is an encouraging testament to the excellent service provided by our department.



Second Prize - Dr Emma Hunter MD

On the 30th of September, I participated in the 1st ANATAS event, where I presented an audit Dr. Stephen Sciberras, Dr. Kristina Duca and myself worked on. The focus was to raise awareness in our department about the implications of using high fresh gas flows, emphasising both the cost to the hospital and the planet.

Giving this presentation was a valuable and insightful experience. I was thrilled to have been awarded second place attributing it to my many run-throughs of my delivery in front of family and friends, who are now experts themselves at low-flow anaesthesia.

I began by outlining the objective of the audit: to examine volatile agent consumption patterns in theatres. Fun facts obtained from this audit include: our median fresh gas flow is 2 L/min, Sevoflurane is the most frequently used volatile agent, most of our cases are intubated, however this had no impact on fresh gas flows and our median FiO₂ is 0.61.

I delved into the economic implications by calculating the hourly cost of each volatile agent. Sevoflurane and Isoflurane at 2 L/min costs 4.90 euro and 0.90 cents, respectively while Desflurane at a median fresh gas flow of 1.2 L/min costs 7 euro per hour. This economic perspective sheds light on considerations often overlooked in theatre, to limit waste.



As for the question, “How low can you go?”, as with many things, it depends. You must have a rebreathing system with carbon dioxide removal, leakage-free, and monitoring of all gases including oxygen. Low flow anaesthesia is described as less than 1 L/min. The lowest you can go is approximately 250 ml/min, metabolic flow, in which case you would only be giving oxygen and the volatile agent in the fresh gas flows.

Presenting the audit boosted my confidence in public speaking amid a warm and inviting event. The atmosphere, coupled with the promise of food and drinks, eased my nerves. Many diverse and captivating presentations were given making it a collaborative learning experience, not so much a competition. We should all be proud of the work we do, and I’m grateful we were given a place to share it. Looking forward to the next!

Third Prize - Dr Kristina Duca MD

Participating in the 1st AAM's National Anaesthetic Trainees Academic Showcase (ANATAS) was a wonderful experience, and having my academic study, 'Obstetrics Admissions to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) over a 6 year period,' recognised with a 3rd place finish out of 9 submissions was gratifying. Myself, Dr. Petramay Attard Cortis, Dr. Glenn Paul Abela and Dr. Nicole Attard have been working tirelessly on this study since January of 2022 and finished working on it in April of 2023, just in time for the 1st ANATAS!

The aim of the study was to perform a retrospective review of obstetric admissions to Mater Dei Hospital's ICU over a six year period (2016 to 2021). This was done to compare and contrast with a previous study performed locally, covering 2012-2015; as well as to compare with international data.

55 obstetric patients were admitted to ICU over the six year period but 51 were included in the study as the other 4 had missing records. 0.19% of obstetric deliveries needed ICU admission and obstetric admissions accounted for 0.68% of all ICU admissions. The commonest admission diagnosis was haemorrhage followed by hypertensive disorders of pregnancy and sepsis. In patients admitted with haemorrhage, mean blood loss was 2.16L. The mean systolic blood pressure in pre-eclamptic patients was 179mmHg. 54.9% required overnight stay. 45 patients required surgical intervention, the commonest being an emergency Caesarean section. No maternal deaths were reported.

The main conclusions of note were that Malta's rate of obstetric ICU admissions falls within the lower range when compared to international reports. Also, the most common obstetric ICU admission diagnosis was found to be haemorrhage, in contrast to other international studies where hypertensive disorders of pregnancy prevail.

The event, held at Palazzo Castelletti in Rabat on September 30th aimed to highlight the academic endeavours of anaesthetic trainees and to help us refine our oral presentation and public speaking skills as well as formally honouring our outstanding submissions. Prior to the event I had the opportunity to attend the 'Presentation and Public Speaking Workshop' led by Dr. Petramay Cortis and Dr. Stephanie Mifsud, organised by the AAM. This workshop was held around a month before the ANATAS and played a very important role to improve my presenting skills and increase my confidence in public speaking. The tips and tricks learned throughout this workshop also made the preparatory process much easier and less daunting.

Finally, I wish to thank all those involved in making the first ANATAS a success and strongly encourage all trainees to take part in the upcoming one!



COURSES & CONFERENCES

Intensive Care Fundamentals Course (ESICM)

DR. CHRISTABEL MIZZI MD MRCP DESAIC EDIC

The Intensive Care Fundamentals, an educational initiative by the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine (ESICM), employs a hybrid educational model. This model involves self-paced learning at home followed by interactive face to face training. A 2 day pilot course took place for the first time at the Simulation Centre at Mater Dei Hospital in Malta in September 2023 with the support of the AAM. The course catered to both newcomers to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and those with some prior ICU experience.



Local Consultant Faculty, supported by ESICM Faculty, delivered the program which included case based scenarios, interactive workshops and high fidelity simulations. The positive reception from the trainees indicates the success of the course in achieving its objectives of providing participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to safely commence work in the ICU. Preparations are currently underway for the ICM Fundamentals 2024 course.





Visit to Baveno - European Airway Congress 2023

DR JOHN VELLA MD

Last October I was part of a group of trainees that attended the European Airway Congress in Baveno. This was my first anesthesia related conference and I had no expectations as to what to expect. At the end of the congress, I was pleased with the focus on small group sessions, with discussions on practical stuff which can be applied back home in our local practice.

Below I listed some of the salient take home messages which were discussed during the ICU airway workshop. You can find the QR Codes link to the relevant papers below.



Delayed sequence induction (DSI) is procedural sedation where the procedure is pre-oxygenation prior to RSI. It is to be used in the context of agitated patients which are not allowing pre-oxygenation to happen and so hypoxemia on induction is expected. The ideal drug for this is ketamine, as it preserves laryngeal reflexes and respiratory drive. 10mg boluses are given (up to 1mg/kg) until the patient is compliant.

Intubation in ITU: Ketamine and etomidate, offer the best cardiovascular stability. Etomidate adrenal suppression is not of concern after one induction dose. INTUBE study has showed that the main complication post op is Hypotension (43%) not Hypoxia (9%). Recommendations for this are; avoiding propofol, peripheral NORAD, fluid resuscitation (although not as effective).



Ventilation during RSI: gentle ventilation before RSI is not associated with increased risk of aspiration, and reduces the risk of hypoxia.

A WORLD AWAY: VOLUNTEERING IN THE PHILIPPINES

DR JULIET CAMILLERI MD

I had been longing to go on a volunteering experience abroad for many years until finally last January I signed up for Mission 2023 in the Philippines with the Missionary Society of St. Paul (MSSP). It was a frightening leap into the unknown and I was not sure what to expect.

Throughout this experience, I helped in preparing lunches for the poor, prepared a catechism class and organised outreaching involving music and activity preparation for various organisations. These included L'Arche community (a community for people with intellectual disabilities), Missionaries of Charity Home for the Abandoned and Neglected Elderly (founded by the sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta), DSWD Center and Institution Reception and Study Center for Children (a government facility that provides temporary homes for neglected, abandoned and abused children) and the International Children's Advocate Incorporated (Ninos Pag-Asa Center - a community for abandoned deaf and blind children). Additionally, as a group we did outreach in a number of schools: Mother Margherita de Brincat Catholic School in Tucop Bataan, and primary and secondary state schools in San Simon and Pagalanggang Bataan and Batiawan Zambales. We even visited disadvantaged communities and families. Moreover, activities with the youth of Jose De Piro Center for arts in Pagalanggang Dinalupian Bataan were held.



The MSSP taught me the true significance of the quote “actions speak louder than words”. I was touched to have met the impoverished people on 13th street in Manila and the youths in Bataan. Their gratitude towards the MSSP community was also moving and conveyed just how much MSSP’s love, support and help is needed and appreciated. The experience also showed me just how fortunate I am and how important it is to be happy with the little things in life such as friendship, karaoke and community time. Moreover, I realized that I have been truly blessed to have acquired free education and afforded to get into university as otherwise my training in anaesthesia would have never been a reality.

I enjoyed my experience so much that I will embark on another mission experience between January and February 2024, only this time focused on general medical work with my colleague Dr. Adrienne Zerafa Simler.



ADVENTURES IN MOROCCO & TANZANIA

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DR JOHN VELLA MD

Last year I managed to find more time to focus on my hobbies, particularly one that has significantly contributed to my physical and mental well being - rock climbing/mountaineering.



In the beginning of 2023, my focus was set to ascend Toubkal (winter) in Morocco, the highest mountain in North Africa. Following rigorous training for a couple of months, two climbing friends and I rented a car from Marrakech, drove to Imlil, a village at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. We slept one night there to help acclimatize at 1800m. The next morning we were met by bad news from our guide: a storm was about to hit the mountains. Although we were devastated, weather conditions should always be taken seriously on the mountain, and we decided to postpone the climb. Instead we drove to the south, visiting and staying at small fishing & surfing villages along the coast. Five days later we returned back to Imlil. Weather conditions had improved and we started our climb from 1800m to the refugio at 3200m. The following day, one of my climbing partners developed a cough and became tachypneic with saturations of 88%, high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) was high on the list.

We started him on dexamethasone and decided that resting and skipping the climb for the day is reasonable, while we attempted Timzegida. The weather conditions were still poor with 90 km/h winds. However, we managed to summit Tumzegida. The next day, his condition improved, and at two in the morning, we started our ascent to Toubkhal summit. The conditions we had were very challenging, with fresh snow, slowing our pace. Temperatures were as low as -20C, but after seven hours of climbing, we managed to summit Toubkal Mountain. After resting for a couple of hours, we descended to Imlil and returned home.

Post Morocco, I continued training for my next mountain in August - Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. This climb focused more on hiking than on technical climbing. Albeit, Kilimanjaro offered a different kind of challenge because of its higher altitude - that of acclimatization. To summit, one has to do a week-long hiking trip, slowly gaining altitude, sometimes ascending then sleeping at a lower altitude.



Upon landing in Tanzania, we stayed a couple of days in Moshi to get some rest, meet the team and prepared for the hike. We started from the rainforest surrounding the mountain. After the second day we were above cloud cover, a sight to behold. Weather was perfect throughout allowing us to enjoy the beautiful views. Summit day was the toughest day.

The ascent started at midnight, and after 1500m of altitude gain we were at the summit. We got a glimpse of the sunrise, with a full moon setting on the other side, and then trekked down. After another two days of walking we were back in Moshi. The rest of the holiday was spent relaxing and backpacking around Tanzania, enjoying the rich landscape and culture it has to offer!



FATIGUE AND ANAESTHESIA

Fatigue Among Anaesthesiologists in Europe: Findings from a joint EBA/NASC Survey

DR ANNE MARIE CAMILLERI PODESTA MD EDAIC EDIC FERC

Anaesthesiologists are particularly vulnerable to the detrimental effects of fatigue as they must make rapid decisions and operate optimally with sustained alertness, situational awareness and good communication despite long working hours and frequent night shifts. Fatigue is associated with increased medical errors as it impairs cognitive function, psychomotor performance and vigilance. Healthcare systems increasingly depend on the resilience of their staff to function effectively.



This study aimed to evaluate the prevalence, severity, causes and implications of work-related fatigue amongst specialist anaesthesiologists. 1508 anaesthesiologists from 32 European countries, including Malta, responded to this survey in 2022. Most anaesthesiologists (92%) who responded to our survey experienced work-related fatigue, with frequent on calls [70% more than 1 in 8] extended daytime hours, resident night shifts [52%], and long on call periods [28% worked 48 – 72 hours]. 39% of respondents received more than 4 phone calls after going to bed and over half took more than 30 minutes to fall asleep after a call. Sleep can be disrupted by being on-call at night, even if not called. For those who worked on call from home and who were required to attend the hospital during the night, almost half said that they were expected to work the next day, regardless of how tired they felt.

The European Work Time Directive (EWTD) was introduced to protect the health and safety of both doctors and patients, but only a third of respondents consistently achieved the required 11 hours rest between duties and 12% never achieved this. Even if they were tired, 15% had no choice but to work clinically post on-call. This raises genuine concerns about the safety of individual anaesthesiologists and their patients. Fatigue induces unrecognised and uncontrolled “microsleeps” and half of our respondents had been involved in an accident or near miss. Napping improves alertness and vigilance and reduces fatigue and performance lapses.

The overwhelming majority of respondents experienced work-related fatigue that significantly impacted their health and wellbeing. Contributory factors include work-shift patterns and duration, understaffing, excessive workload, frequency and/or lack of work breaks, and poor rest facilities. Hospital employers have a duty to protect their employees' health, safety and welfare and should implement strategies to minimise the risks of injuries and incidents associated with fatigue.

Strategies to decrease fatigue include:

- Limiting the shift length, since extended shifts increase the risk of fatigue-related incidents
- Providing and implementing strategies for staff to take frequent breaks and ensuring staff have sleep opportunities during shifts
- Providing adequate rest facilities in the hospital
- Ad-hoc working patterns for the ageing anaesthesiologist and other individual needs
- Recognising time on-call from home in job plans
- Limiting consecutive night shifts to a maximum of three
- Sustained monitoring of doctors' physical and mental well-being
- Ensuring that only life and limb-saving surgery occurs at night
- Education and training on sleep hygiene.

Work schedules should be congruent with principles of sleep physiology; managers should ensure that the work done at night, and particularly at the circadian nadir is kept to a minimum. A universal change in culture is needed where managers acknowledge that fatigue impacts patient and staff safety. Link and QR code to the full article can be found below;

*[https://journals.lww.com/ejanaesthesiology/fulltext/2024/01000/
fatigue_among_anaesthesiologists_in_europe_.3.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/ejanaesthesiology/fulltext/2024/01000/fatigue_among_anaesthesiologists_in_europe_.3.aspx)*



HELPING WITH THE AAM

My experience in the Education and Events

Subcommittee Team

DR ADRIENNE ZERAFA SIMLER MD

The first call for the Education and Events subcommittee was issued on the 7th October 2022. This was the first call for such a committee on the AAM under the guidance of the Education and Events Coordinator, Dr. Petramay Attard Cortis. Comprising a dynamic team including Mike Micallef, Matthew Drake, Martina Cilia, Maria Spiteri Zammit, Kristina Duca, Julia Aquilina, and myself, this was the perfect opportunity to engage in activities of personal interest, acquire new skills, and foster stronger connections with colleagues.

The Education and Events Subcommittee hit the ground running and organised a vibrant and eventful year for all the members of the Anaesthesia department to enjoy. I am very proud to say that our dedication and hard work led to the successful organization of various events, each contributing to the enrichment of our professional community. These events included:

- Christmas Event – January 2023
- Paediatric Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Seminar – February 2023
- Team Building Escape Room Event – March 2023
- ReACT – April 2023
- Presentation and Public Speaking Workshop – June 2023
- Science and the City – September 2023
- ANATAS and AAM Summer Event – September 2023

All the events were very well attended by the members of our department, while also attracting participation from colleagues in emergency medicine, paediatrics, and foundation year doctors. This encouraged the subcommittee to keep working hard throughout the year. I was particularly involved in the organisation of three of these very successful events, including the AAM Christmas party, ReACT, and the first ANATAS and AAM Summer event.

Joining the Education and Events subcommittee was much more than just a good time. It allowed me to actively contribute to the AAM, develop valuable organizational and teamwork skills, and establish connections with senior committee members. Through this experience, I became part of a close-knit team, strengthening bonds with colleagues who have now become friends.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Dr. Petramay Attard Cortis, the AAM committee, and all my colleagues on the Education and Events subcommittee for such a remarkable year. I eagerly await the exciting events that the Education and Events subcommittee has in store for us next year!

FUTURE CONFERENCES & COURSES

**18th World Congress of
Anaesthesiologists WFSA**

3-7 March
Singapore

<https://www.wca2024.org/>

**Global Peri-Operative
Medicine: Anaesthesia, Pain
and Critical Care Conference
- What's New?**

14-15 March
America Square Conference
Centre, London, UK

<https://ti.to/the-royal-marsden/global-peri-operative23>

ISICEM, 2024

19-22 March
Brussels, Belgium

https://www.isicem.org/1/Programme_new.asp

**SOAP
(Society for Obstetric
Anesthesia & Perinatology)
2024 Annual Meeting**

1-5 May
Denver Colorado, USA

<https://web.cvent.com/event/d2f9f464-7688-4a52-8c73-bc549e89130e/summary?RefId=2024soapannualmeeting>

**2024 ANZCA Annual
Scientific Meeting**

3-7 May
Brisbane, Australia

<https://www.anzca.edu.au/events-courses/events/major-events/anzca-national-events/2024-anzca-asm>

**Obstetric Anaesthesia
Annual Scientific Meeting
2024**

9-10 May
Birmingham, UK

<https://www.oaa-anaes.ac.uk/events/annual-scientific-meeting-birmingham>

**1st EuroMed Conference,
ESICM**

15-18 May
Marrakech, Morocco

<https://www.esicm.org/events/euro-med-2024/>

Anaesthesia 2024

21-24 May
Glasgow and Online

<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/events/anaesthesia-2024-innovation>

FUTURE CONFERENCES & COURSES

CAI Annual Congress of Anaesthesiology, 2024	23-24 May, 2024 Dublin, Ireland	www.anaesthesia.ie
Euroanaesthesia 2024	25-27 May Munich, Germany	https://euroanaesthesia.org/2024/
BPS 57th Annual Scientific Meeting	4-6 June Nottingham, UK	https://bpsasm.org/
European Society of Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive care, ESPNIC 2024	11-14 June Rome, Italy	https://espnice2024.kenes.com/
Critical Care Reviews Meeting 2024	12-14th June Belfast, Northern Ireland	https://criticalcarereviews.com/meetings/ccr24
37th Scandinavian Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine (SASI) Congress	17-19 June Oulu, Finland	https://ssai.info/congress/
ESAIC Advanced Patient Safety Course	1-2 July 2024 London, UK	https://www.esaic.org/event/esaic-advanced-patient-safety-course-london/
The British Pain Society, Events Calendar	/	https://www.britishpainsociety.org/mediacentre/events/other-meetings/

UPCOMING AAM EVENTS

24

FEBRUARY

FOCUS ON OBSTETRIC
ANAESTHESIA &
INTENSIVE CARE
SEMINAR - AN
EDUCATIONAL EVENT

6

APRIL

RECOGNITION & ACUTE
CARE TREATMENT
(REACT) COURSE

TBA

APRIL/MAY

TEAM BUILDING
EVENT
MORE INFO SOON!

SPECIAL SHOUTOUTS

**DR STEVE BUGEJA, DR KRISTINA ELLUL
& DR BEN THORNTON**

*Successfully finished their training
programme in 2023*

TRAINEES

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

A HELPING HAND: PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

MATER DEI HOSPITAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

For more information, you can reach them on:

25456900/1 or email psychologyreferral.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!

FIGHTING FATIGUE TOGETHER

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

Quality care for the patient starts with quality care for the staff.

More information can be found on:

www.fightingfatiguetogether.eu

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Editor:

Dr Stephanie Mifsud

Editorial Assistant & Design:

Dr Martina Gerada

Writers:

Dr Julia Aquilina, Dr Petramay Attard Cortis, Dr Juliet Camilleri, Dr Anne Marie Camilleri Podesta, Dr Kristina Duca, Dr Daniel Farrugia, Dr Rebecca Galea, Dr Martina Gerada, Dr Emma Hunter, Dr Stephanie Mifsud, Dr Christabel Mizzi, Dr John Vella, Dr Adrienne Zerafa Simler