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Dylan Said (338692M) – Endeavour Scholarship 2017 (Group B)

The Doctorate in Pharmacy (Pharm.D) course is offered by the Department of Pharmacy of the University of Malta, Malta, in collaboration with the College of Pharmacy at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Illinois, USA (UIC). This course is unique in that it combines the development and application of advanced clinical pharmacy skills with contextual research. Taught study-units are delivered jointly by both Universities.

The programme is targeted at pharmacists who would like to advance their careers by enhancing professional clinical practice with a research perspective. It offers a level 8 doctorate degree in clinical pharmacy and is suitable for pharmacists working in hospitals, primary-care or community pharmacy and pharmacy administration settings. The programme is based over three years of study covering a total of 6 semesters.

The doctorate programme empowers pharmacists practising in professional areas to assume leadership roles that will drive policies and developments in clinical practice and service that draws on scientific, evidence-based research.

The taught component formed the basis of theoretical knowledge which branches out to the core areas of health system and clinical sciences. Candidates were trained to critically evaluate literature in a systematic approach and the clinical application of statistical tools was explored. Advanced concepts of pharmacoeconomics, such as the advanced economic evaluation in healthcare, health policy management and pricing of medicinal products and reimbursement schemes, were discussed. Healthcare models in the USA and EU were studied, including their modes of delivery and health financing which were taken as factors to appraise health systems and to propose models for developing health systems with rational and safe delivery. Candidates were also equipped with an armamentarium of clinical concepts which integrates the scientific aspects of medicinal chemistry, drug action, pharmacokinetic and toxicology to the use of drugs in disease state management. The application of evidence-based medicine to pharmacotherapeutics, with the identification of benefits and limitations to patient populations and individual patients, was presented.

The second pillar of the programme constituted hands-on practice in the clinical and hospital settings which sought the development of systematic skills in patient assessment, drug therapy problems, collaborative therapeutic management and pharmaceutical policies.

The third curricular element was the doctoral dissertation which aimed at enhancing critical analysis skills while exposing the student to international research communities. My research area bridged health policy with regulatory sciences since it sought to analyse the commonalities and differences in scientific opinions between regulatory and Health Technology Assessment (HTA) experts when assessing innovative medicines, taking agents indicated for leukaemia as a case study. The implications of this research to Malta and the broader European context draws to the importance of synergy between regulatory and HTA decision-makers for the benefit of stakeholders in the medicines access pathways, particularly patients who will gain from faster access to novel interventions.

This degree was carried out following the award of an Endeavour Scholarship Scheme which is funded out of National Funds.