

2018 National Epilepsy Conference

Epilepsy: Finding Help

L-Epilessija: Kif insibu l-għajnuna



Saturday, 10th March, 2018
Dolmen Resort Hotel

"Epilepsy: Finding Help", has been chosen to be the theme of this year's national conference of the Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association. The conference is being held in conjunction with the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics of the University of Malta. The conference, which will convene at the Dolmen Resort Hotel on Saturday 10 March 2018, will highlight practical aspects of how and where to seek help for proper epilepsy diagnosis and treatment. There are over 4,000 persons who have been diagnosed with epilepsy in Malta and Gozo. Epilepsy is often a hidden medical condition which requires several varying medical and support services and it can greatly affect a person's social and personal life. We are honoured that the conference will be opened by HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta. Among the speakers will be Prof Dorothée Kasteleijn, Netherlands. We also have several distinguished local speakers such as Dr. Josanne Aquilina, Dr. Doriette Soler, Dr. Edith Said, Dr. Jimmy Farrugia, as well as also interactive workshops.

This conference will be of specific interest to persons with epilepsy and their families, educators, teachers and LSAs and various health care professionals and students (doctors, pharmacists, nurses etc) who work with persons with epilepsy. We are sure that this conference will be of great interest to all the participants and the interactive session will stimulate a great deal of discussion.

THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Caroline Attard, Matthew Attard, Manuel Camilleri, Sarah Fleri, Janet Mifsud, Robin Pinkston, Frank Portelli, Noel Portelli, Adriana Soler, Zvetlana Zerafa.



CMEA Tribute to Victoria & Mario Dimech



Since our last conference in February 2016 our Association received a double blow, with the passing away of Victoria and Mario Dimech. Their absence in the organisation of this conference is deeply felt. Victoria was our Secretary and Mario ex President and they were both very active in the Epilepsy community not only in Malta but also overseas. The number of condolences we received from all chapters of International Bureau for Epilepsy prove this. Victoria served a full term, 4 years on EREC European Regional Executive Committee within the International Bureau for Epilepsy. Victoria left the position of Secretary due to health problems only to return to her position after a few months even though she was far from recovered. I assure you that she considered our committee as part of her family. Victoria passed away on 28th June, 2016 at the age of 55 years.

Mario was our first President since the Association was formed. He held this position for about 18 years. He was very active both locally and also abroad. Many times besides his role he did all duties relating to our Association when the need arose. Mario attended all European Conferences on epilepsy except the last one held in Prague, this was due to health problems. He made several acquaintances during these conferences and corresponded with many foreign professionals and thus he gained much experience. Mario passed away on 27th November, 2017 at the age of 65, just 17 months after Victoria's demise.

THIS CONFERENCE IS DEDICATED TO BOTH OF YOU.



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- 08.30 **Registration and welcome coffee**
- 09.00 **Chair** - Mr Frank Portelli, President,
Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association
Welcome Remarks
HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta
Mr Leonid McKay, Director, Caritas Malta
- 09.35 **Plenary talks**
Chair - Mr. Matthew Attard,
Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association
Finding help: Understanding different types of seizures - Prof Dorothée Kasteleijn,
Department of Neurosurgery and Epilepsy
University Medical Center Utrecht, The Netherlands
- 10.05 **Questions**
- 10.15 **Coffee break**
- 10.45 **Finding help: the process in Malta**
Moderators: Ms Robin Pinkston/Ms Sarah Fleri
Dr Josanne Aquilina, Consultant Neurologist MDH
Dr Doriette Soler, Consultant NeuroPaediatrician, MDH



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- 11.15 **Finding help: what services are available in Malta**
Moderators: Ms Robin Pinkston/Ms Sarah Fleri
Panel - Dr Edith Said, Genetics Consultant MDH;
Dr Jimmy Farrugia, Consultant Paediatrician, CDAU;
Ms Josette Portelli, Speech Language Pathologist;
Ms Erika Taylor East, Pharmacist;
Mr Sandro Fabri, EEG Technician
- 12.00 **Discussion and questions**
- 12.30 **Lunch**
- 14.00 **Interactive Workshops**
A **Finding help: for children** – Dr Doriette Soler,
Ms Robin Pinkston
B **Finding help: for adults** – Dr Josanne Aquilina,
Mr Matthew Attard
C **Finding help: Caregivers** – Dr Jimmy Farrugia,
Mr Frank Portelli
- 15.30 **Report from workshops** - Prof Janet Mifsud, University of Malta
- 15.45 **Closing** – Hon Dr Michael Falzon, Minister for the Family,
Children's Rights and Social Solidarity



Prof Dorothée Kasteleijn-Nolst Trenité

University Medical Center Utrecht,
The Netherlands (Brain Center) &
Sapienza University Rome, Italy (Faculty of Medicine
& Psychology)



Dorothée Kasteleijn has been extensively trained after obtaining her MD degree in Utrecht, in the field of epilepsy in broad sense in the Dutch Epilepsy Centre (now known as SEIN). She has practiced for more than 30 years predominantly child-epileptology, but was also involved in adolescent and adult care. She has done research on various topics of epilepsy, but most of all she is known for her work on reflex epilepsy and especially photosensitivity. She helped developing the successful photosensitivity human model as proof of concept for the acceleration of anti-epileptic drug development. She has published more than 120 peer reviewed articles and 30 book chapters and was editor of 4 supplements and a book. She is invited as keynote speaker all over the world. She is very active in international collaboration, founded an European Consortium on Photosensitivity Genetics and stimulated the development of EU guidelines on use of photic stimulation and EU driving regulations. She is co-editor of Epilepsy & behavior Case Reports as well as on the editorial boards of Epilepsia and Epilepsy and Behavior. She stimulates and supports young colleagues on their "epilepsy-path", helps patients worldwide with recognition and prevention of their photosensitivity and tries to create awareness of this specific epilepsy phenomenon in the society at large.

Abstract:

Finding Help: Understanding different types of seizures

Epilepsy can present itself in many different ways. It can also change its appearance over a lifetime, after drug therapy and change of circumstances. In order to make first of all a correct diagnosis of epilepsy, it is important to have a description of the attacks as precise as possible. What does the person noticed: a special feeling in the stomach, a sensation of dizziness, seeing colored balls, tingling in the arms etc. or nothing. Was there falling to one side or just backwards

etc. With loss of consciousness the observation becomes of course fully dependent on what the family members/caretakers have seen. This might be difficult as usually fear takes over. Support of the patient is the most important now and waiting until the attack is over can take forever in one's mind. Memory might then be limited afterwards about what really has happened. And the patient him/herself does not recall anything anymore due to memory loss. She/he only recognizes now headache and sleepiness and that time has passed by unnoticed. Some people know that they had a seizure when they look at their watch. When more attacks occur and the feeling of security that these will end spontaneously builds up for the family members, better observation is possible. Video images from the cellphone are a great help nowadays. The physician would like to know as many details as possible: what has happened in what circumstances- are there any typical movements and in what sequence? The more detailed the information, the easier a highly likely diagnosis of epilepsy ("not everything that shakes is epilepsy") can be made that only needs confirmation by an EEG investigation. It also gives already a clue about the type of seizure/epilepsy, which in turn has consequences for choice of preventive measures, drug treatment or further exploration of epilepsy surgery options. Focal epileptic seizures need to be distinguished from generalized ones, both in terms of clinical observations (R arm always shakes first as focal sign) and in the EEG (Left-sided onset of the epileptiform discharges). In children a very important signal for proper classification with consequences for treatment and prognosis is whether there is a decline in development. Luckily most epilepsies are not that bad- many are very easy to treat and will disappear after some years.



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**Epilepsy is a hidden condition,
treat everyone with respect.**

image by Alexander Attard

If you want to know more about epilepsy and CMEA contact us on: maltaepilepsy@gmail.com



The organisers would like to acknowledge the kind support of:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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