

Press release: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**First National Public Health Symposium Friday 20 October**

Trends in Health System Privatization was the theme of the opening key note session of the first National Public Health Symposium organised jointly by the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine and the Departments of Public Health and Health Services Management of the University of Malta.

The symposium was held on Friday 20 October at Mater Dei Hospital and attracted over 120 participants. The symposium was addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health, Chris Fearne, Pro Rector Prof Joseph Cacciottolo and Dr Kenneth Grech, President of the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine. Dr Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat, Senior Lecturer within the Health Services Management Department was responsible for the organisation of the symposium.

Dr Ewout van Ginneken, from the Berlin hub of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and who has published widely on health systems known for their private sector orientation, emphasised that hospitals and health insurances could function well irrespective of public or private ownership so long as a transparent and accountable governance structure is in place.

The symposium also discussed the impact of Brexit on the British NHS which is reportedly likely to be significant and wide-ranging with the performance of the economy and loss of health care workers posing the biggest risk.

Findings from more than 30 scientific papers produced by local public health practitioners and researchers were presented and discussed.

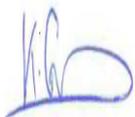
Minister Fearne expressed his satisfaction with the results that Malta was achieving in international reputable exercises ranking health system performance for example, notably the recent publication placing Malta in the 8<sup>th</sup> place worldwide in implementation of health related sustainable development goals. He appealed to public health doctors to engage politically to continue to improve health and well-being. He also appealed for prevention to be given the priority it merits.

Prof Cacciottolo highlighted the importance of public health in bringing together scientific evidence to foster health and wellbeing for all groups in society, particularly the most vulnerable and to work assiduously to assemble and communicate the evidence on the negative effects of poverty on health and well-being.

Dr Kenneth Grech, President of the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine called for public health practitioners to continue to play an important role and make their presence felt in the senior decision making processes and positions within the health sector.

Abstracts will be available at [maphm.org/symposium](http://maphm.org/symposium)

The event was supported by Sanofi.



Dr Kathleen England  
Hon. Secretary  
Malta Association of Public Health Medicine