

Seminar on biosimilar medicines

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Introduction: Biological medicines have revolutionised the outlook for many patients suffering from serious illnesses, such as: cancer, autoimmune and neurological conditions. With patents and exclusivity periods of proprietary biological medicines expiring, biosimilars are promising accessible therapeutic plans, whilst potential challenges are recognised. The objective was to develop an educational seminar on biosimilars for the sharing of knowledge and experiences amongst cross-sector stakeholders with an interest in the field.

Method: In August 2021, the Academy for Patient Centred Excellence and Innovation in Regulatory Sciences, under the auspices of the Malta Medicines Authority (MMA), in collaboration with local specialists and an international academic, organised an interactive seminar on biosimilars. The six-hour programme comprised of a series of presentations, a discussion and a networking session. The initiative was part financed by the Internationalisation Partnership Awards Scheme Plus (IPAS+) of the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST).

Results: The academic activity was awarded two Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points by the Malta College of Doctors. 75 national and international participants working in the public and private health sectors, including representatives of pharmaceutical and biotechnological companies, patient advocates, regulatory affairs professionals, policy makers, procurement officers, physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and academics participated actively. Topics encompassed development, safety, prescribing and switching, economic considerations, impact on healthcare and the future of the biosimilar market. Barriers to uptake, and factors that contribute to long-term sustainability of biosimilars, were also addressed.

Conclusions: The seminar served a good purpose to disseminate information and as a key platform amongst different stakeholders. The academic platform within the MMA proved crucial to co-ordinate and lead such educational initiatives. The nature of the seminar provided a window into the composite landscape of biosimilars and presented an opportunity for the MMA to strengthen international relationships and foster collaborative impetus for long-lasting research consortia, knowledge propagation, pharmaceutical innovation and healthcare sustainability.

Double degree in pharmacy and small and medium enterprise management in the University of Salamanca

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Introduction: The double degree in Pharmacy and Small and Medium Enterprise Management (SME) was approved by the Governing Council of the University of Salamanca (USAL) on the 31 March 2016 as the first double degree of this kind in Spain. The next academic year (2016-2017) the course was successfully implemented. At this point, the current academic year will go through the first student's graduations. In this scenario it looks appropriate to review the evolution of the degree.

Method: The analysis was based on the available results from the surveys carried out by the quality assessment area of the USAL as well as the indicators also provided by this unit for the courses 2016-17 to 2020-21.

Results: The success rates of the double degree students have been improving progressively from its launching. Although this rate is always below the value obtained for the degree of Pharmacy, it reached 78.1% in the academic year 2019-20 (last available results). The student's survey on the training programme shows that they are very satisfied with the faculty's facilities, the infrastructures and most importantly with the teaching-learning process. The lowest rated items are those related to coordination and distribution of tasks. This was also highlighted in the follow-up meetings of the students with the academic responsible. As a result of this feedback and in order to make improvements in this regard, some changes were introduced in the organisation of the training programme.

Conclusions: The double degree in Pharmacy and SMEs is consolidated in the Faculty of Pharmacy of the USAL, and the student performance rates have been stepwise improved since its implementation. Coordination is the most critical point of this training itinerary. Efforts, such as a reorganisation of the training programme, have been made in order to achieve better and more efficient coordination to fulfil the students' expectations.