

Malta Association of Skin and Wound Care: promoting collaboration and research

The Malta Association of Skin and Wound Care (MASC), established in December 2005 and recognised as a non-governmental organisation in 2019, is dedicated to educating health professionals in order to enhance skin and wound care for the population of Malta.

Despite facing setbacks due to COVID-19, we have successfully hosted two seminars over the last two years: one was a hybrid event (with participants taking part in-person and remotely); and the other was a full-day, in-person conference held on 26 May 2023. With over 200 attendees, our event featured both local and international speakers from diverse backgrounds. The aim of the conference was to provide the audience, mainly nurses and podiatrists, with thought-provoking and essential information on local research, and to share knowledge from an international perspective.

Prof. Joseph Borg and Dr. Christine Gatt discussed Project Maleth, a programme investigating how spaceflight and microgravity affect the microbiome of diabetic foot ulcers. They explored mutations in bacteria under these stresses, including antibiotic resistance, using tissue samples transported to the International Space Station during Project Maleth missions from 2021–2023. Initial findings were promising, revealing changes in bacterial abundance and genomic profiles. Further analysis will uncover mutations and metabolites produced during spaceflight.

Prof. Paulo Jorge Alves captivated the audience by presenting different perspectives on wound injuries and spoke about forensic wounds, a new and well-received topic for our audience. Emilio Galea addressed the high mortality rate of diabetes-related amputations, emphasising the need for awareness, routine check-ups, and evidence-based care to save patients' lives. Madeleine Flannagan discussed the importance of wounds and the prevention of wounds for people at the end of life, a topic that is rarely discussed but much needed in an older population.

Samantha Holloway highlighted factors affecting skin health, especially with regards to ageing. Her strategies included: educating health professionals, patients and caregivers on skin hygiene; moisturising; nutrition; and fall prevention. The key message was to prioritise skin health for overall wellbeing.

Prof. Kevin Cassar, a vascular surgeon, stressed the pivotal role of nurses and other health and care professionals in identifying at-risk patients and referring them to the appropriate department. He emphasised that by working together we can reduce patient mortality and improve their quality of life. Finally, he showcased the much-needed 24-hour on-call telephone line for professionals to contact a vascular surgeon.

In summary, the MASC Association is committed to advancing healthcare knowledge and practices in the field of skin and wound care, with a focus on critical issues related to diabetes-related amputations, skin health, and the application of technology to improve patient outcomes. During the last couple of decades, MASC has continued to provide courses endorsed by the European Wound Management Association, and organised annual seminars to keep nurses and other health and care professionals updated on the latest skin and wound care evidence. **JWC**

Speakers at the May 2023 conference and members of the MASC Administrative Committee (from left to right): Jurgen Bonett; Bernard Calleja; Madeleine Flannagan; Joseph Borg; Samantha Holloway; Corinne Scicluna Ward; Cynthia Formosa, Paulo Jorge Alvez; Omar Schembri, Christine Fenech (Gina Sant and Kevin Cassar, not in photograph)



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