



Editorial

My First Editorial

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It is with mixed feelings of gratefulness and enthusiasm that I am writing my first editorial as Editor-in-Chief of Xjenza Online. I am deeply thankful to the Malta Chamber of Scientists for entrusting me with the honour and responsibility of leading this esteemed journal. Moreover, since the start of 2018 the journal has embarked on an exciting journey under the leadership of a refreshed Editorial Board. The team includes now 2 Senior Editors, Dr Sebastiano D'Amico and Prof. David C Magri, and 10 associate editors who will provide support in developing and promoting Xjenza Online, contributing review advice and leading special issues. In addition, the expanded editorial and advisory boards will greatly enhance the expertise and international reach of Xjenza Online.

Looking at the previous issues of Xjenza, I have to acknowledge the tremendous development and fantastic achievements of the journal during the past years. Xjenza has steadily been improving its quality and standards, and it is now much more than simply the Science Journal of the Malta Chamber of Scientists. The journal not only provides a dedicated forum for publishing high-quality research articles in all areas of science in the Maltese Islands, but also serves as the main launching and training platform into scientific publishing for a wide scope of potential authors, including students and young researchers, in a peer-reviewed environment.

Thus, I would like to express first my sincere gratitude and heartfelt appreciation for all of the hard work and dedication to Prof. Giuseppe Di Giovanni, who gave life back to our journal in 2013, led the journal as Editor-in-Chief for 5 years, and steered the Journal to the prominence it currently enjoys. I am delighted that Prof. di Giovanni will continue being part of the 'family' and will join us on this new venture as Publication Manager. Then, I cheerfully welcome our newly arrived associate editors, who accepted the difficult task of continuing and expanding the fine work done until now:

Dr Alexandra Bonnici, Dr Lourdes Farrugia, Dr Gianluca Valentino, and Dr Pierre Vella. Also, many, many thanks to those who have agreed to continue their contribution to Xjenza Online having already supported the journal as long-serving editorial board members: Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino, Prof. Liberato Camilleri, Gabriel Farrugia, Mr Joseph Galea, Dr Katya De Giovanni, Dr Sandro Lafranco, Prof. David Mifsud, Dr Massimo Pierucci, Dr Jackson Levi Said, and Prof Ian Thornton. Last but not least, I extend my deepest thanks to the departing associate editors (Prof. Carmel Cefai, Dr Philip Farrugia and Dr Nicholas Sammut) and editorial assistant, Sunneth Lawrence, for all the time and efforts invested into the development of the journal.

There are, of course, still many challenges ahead for the new Editorial Board: improve the visibility of the Journal not only nationally but also internationally, increase the engagement and recruitment of papers from the local scientific community, transform the Journal into an active scientific open access forum in the Mediterranean region, just to name a few...

I am pleasantly pleased that my first issue of Xjenza Online continues the trend of highlighting excellent research in a wide range of sciences of both local and international relevance, as well as being a fair reflection of the vibrant scientific research environment in Malta.

The issue opens with a thorough assessment of the oral health status and treatment needs of Gozo residents by Anne-Marie Agius et al. The study reveals a high level of unmet dental treatment needs in Gozo, and is an informative callout for a better provision of dental services, reorientation of the focus of existing services on prevention and the introduction of evidence-based preventive strategies in children.

Edward and Simon Attard-Montaldo raise important questions related to courtesy, driving manners and safety on Maltese roads, and whether these are related to driver and vehicle characteristics. The results of this

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analysis might not come as a surprise to any Maltese residents. Irrespective of Malta's general reputation for excellent hospitality and friendliness, there is a lack of courtesy on the roads and a lot of room for improvement.

Next, Lara Marie Azzopardi et al. investigates the multilevel factor structure underlying the five-subscale Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) on a sample of 5200 Maltese students aged between 6 and 16 years. SDQ was initially proposed by Goodman (1997) and has been subsequently used to measure emotional, conduct, hyperactivity, peer and prosocial behavior in children.

The following article features the research carried out at the Institute of Linguistics and Language Technology of the University of Malta under the auspices of the EU-funded C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project and focuses on the verbal expression of xenophobic and homophobic attitudes in Malta. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to identify the extent to which comments posted online in reaction to news reports encompassed discriminatory attitudes. The research carried out by Stavros Assimakopoulos and Rebecca Vella Muscat provides a critical insight into the intricate relationship between language and ideology which has far-reaching sociological and political implications.

Then, Theresia Dalli et al. assess the incidence of intracranial vascular malformations (IVMs) in the Maltese population, their mode of presentation, patterns of interventions, and follow-up of the lesions. The outcomes of this study are worrying in the sense that the majority of patients received no intervention in spite of the fact that IVMs may cause significant morbidity in patients and timely recognition is essential. Therefore, there is an acute need of adequate guidelines for clinicians on the evidence-based management of IVMs.

Manwel Debono's manuscript highlights some very

important findings of a survey carried out among a representative national sample of 781 employees which both confirm and refute current common knowledge about trade unions in Malta. The author pinpoints the fact that in order to prevent further decline in trade union density and membership, Maltese unions need to reorganise themselves, refocus their strategies and become more effective in attracting and retaining non-traditional members.

The minireview article by Shimul Sujit Sen and Gabriele Deidda resumes the scientific studies carried out to investigate the effect of yoga in the physiology of the body and the brain, and its possible use to ameliorate some pathological conditions. From spiritual explorations and philosophical expressions, we switch almost 'naturally' to the commentary of Giuseppe di Giovanni on the use of cannabis not for the controversial recreational purposes but as a cure for severe paediatric epilepsies. This latter article strongly emphasizes the fact that marijuana research should not be demonized, but rather be encouraged and supported as it may save millions of lives.

The issue culminates with my News article which reports on the success of the 9th International Conference "Inverse Problems: Modelling and Simulation" (IPMS 2018) which was held in Malta in May 21–25, 2018, at the Paradise Bay Hotel, which transformed Malta, at least for the years to come, in the new hub for the worldwide research community of inverse problems.

I will conclude by assuring the readers and contributors to Xjenza Online that we will try our best to improve further the content of the journal and feature the outstanding accomplishments in a wide range of sciences both in Malta and abroad.

Cristiana Sebu
Editor-in-Chief of Xjenza Online