

Aspirations - Endeavours and Progress

THESE LAST 26 YEARS

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In this issue it is fitting that we look back at the then Malta Union of Pharmacists and later when it combined with the Chamber of Pharmacists to see to what extent they had been able to realise their objectives and on the progress that has been made so far.

MALTA UNION OF PHARMACISTS

The Chamber of Pharmacists on the 9th April 1961 called an Extraordinary General Meeting expressively for the formation of a Trade Union. This was held at the University Theatre, Valletta. Mr. A.M. Darmania and Mr. Degabriele were proposed and elected Chairman and Secretary respectively to conduct the meeting. All 33 pharmacists present agreed unanimously on the principle that a Trade Union for Pharmacists be formed. The statute previously drafted by the Chamber of Pharmacists was amended and approved. The objectives as set out in the statute were:

- to uphold the honour and promote the interests of the Pharmaceutical Profession in Malta;
- to promote the interests of pharmaceutical practitioners collectively and individually maintain and improve the condition under which the profession is exercised, to establish relations with the controlling authorities and such other persons or bodies as may be approved by the Conference from time to time;
- to provide for the promotion of professional knowledge, science and practice.

The Union was registered with the Registrar of Trade Unions as the 'Malta Union of Pharmacists'.

The Annual Conference (as it was then called) was to be held between May and July. As from 1963 the Union started holding them at the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions of which the Union was a member. The Executive Committee consisted of the President and eight other members. (The Executive Committee, at the first meeting which was held within a week of its taking up office elected from among themselves a vice-president, a secretary and a treasurer.)

The financial resources were derived from memberships and donations.

Professional Aspirations

With industrialisation, progress in the pharmaceutical field was so great that the pharmacist was no longer compounding medicines but dispensing very potent, specific and potentially dangerous drugs.

Since World War Two, the pharmacist was in the general public's view losing his identity, and uninformed opinion repeatedly stated that a full time pharmacist was no longer essential in pharmacies. The profession continuously insisted that dispensing requires the continuous supervision of a Pharmacist.

The Union's aspirations were to re-establish the importance and need of the pharmacist. Existing pharmacies could not survive financially on the sale of medicines and related pharmaceuticals. The opening of more pharmacies was creating great economic problems. Commercialisation was turning pharmacies into bazaars. Some of the owners could not afford a Pharmacist and employed a Managing Pharmacist 'di nomina' and some were forced to close down or restrict themselves to toiletries and cosmetics. Due to this deterioration in pharmacy practice, a number of Pharmacists were seeking work as analysts, medical representatives, teachers, etc., where they had a better remuneration and better working conditions.

Throughout its existence the Union tried to put an end to a Managing Pharmacist 'di nomina' on several occasions expressing its views on the necessary reforms in pharmacies. In a statement issued after the first meeting of the Board to study Pharmacy, the Malta Union of Pharmacists urged that as in other European countries there should be:

- a planned distribution of pharmacies
- that a pharmacist is present in a pharmacy
- the establishment of a Pharmacy Board to safeguard the prestige of the profession
- Pharmacist inspectors of pharmacies.

A number of obstacles were met in their drive for the establishment of the Pharmacy Board. It

was in 1965 that the Bill was presented in Parliament, together with two new amendments providing that poisons may be sold by a pharmacist only and for the appointment of pharmacist inspectors.

The Pharmacy Board was to be a voice in the conduct of the profession's own affairs and would contribute to the solution of the many problems which were facing Pharmacy. The Board in consultation with the Union proposed a new code of ethics and prepared a list of substances that could be sold by pharmacies.

The Union repeatedly requested the Board and the Authorities concerned:

- to suppress unethical advertising of pharmacies
- to check that goods that pertain to pharmacies were not to be sold from other shops
- for a higher profit margin on medicinals
- to appoint Pharmacy Inspectors
- to standardise prices
- for the presence of a Pharmacist at every agency importing pharmaceuticals
- to restrict ownership of Pharmacies to members of the profession.

The Union was consulted by the authorities on amendments to the regulations.

The absence of an established professional fee had long been felt and in 1970 the Union presented Recommendations for the Establishment of a Pharmacists' Professional fee to the Pharmacy Board for consultation.

Only a few years after its establishment, the Pharmacy Board was already not living up to expectations.

In 1967 the Pharmacy profession for the first time was represented by Pharmacist J. Gerada on the Council of Health.

In a Memoandum sent to the Minister of Trade, Industry and Agriculture the Union claimed for a higher profit margin on medicinals (the profit margin on medicinals was very low by international standards. The claim for a rise to 33½% was agreed to by the Pharmacy Board). They claimed to eradicate price cutting in retail pharmacies.

The M.U.P.'s concern about the social and economic welfare of its employee pharmacists, is expressed most often through its continuous effort to ameliorate the conditions of employment and to establish desired salary limits. In 1965 through a motion passed during the general meeting, a call was made on all pharmacists not to submit applications for employment as Junior Analyst/Junior Pharmacist, until the

Malta Union of Pharmacists

Presidents

Mr. A.M. Darmania	1961-1968
Mr. F. Felice	1969-
Mr. J.P. Sciberras	1969-1973
Mr. E. Mizzi	1973-1976
Mr. M. Zarb Adamj	1976-1977

Secretaries

Mr. E. Attard Bezzina	1961-1962
Mr. F. Formosa	1962-1968
Mr. E. Zammit	1969-1973
Dr. A. Serracino Inglott	1973-1975
Mr. E. Zammit	1975-1977

anomaly has been satisfactory removed. Through these efforts there was an improvement in the salary of Hospital Pharmacists.

The Union called the attention of the authorities concerned when foreign Pharmacists were working in Malta as medical representatives without the necessary permit.

Education

The Union was always concerned about Pharmacy Education and in collaboration with the Chamber of Pharmacists, strove against the abolition in 1968 of the Course from the University.

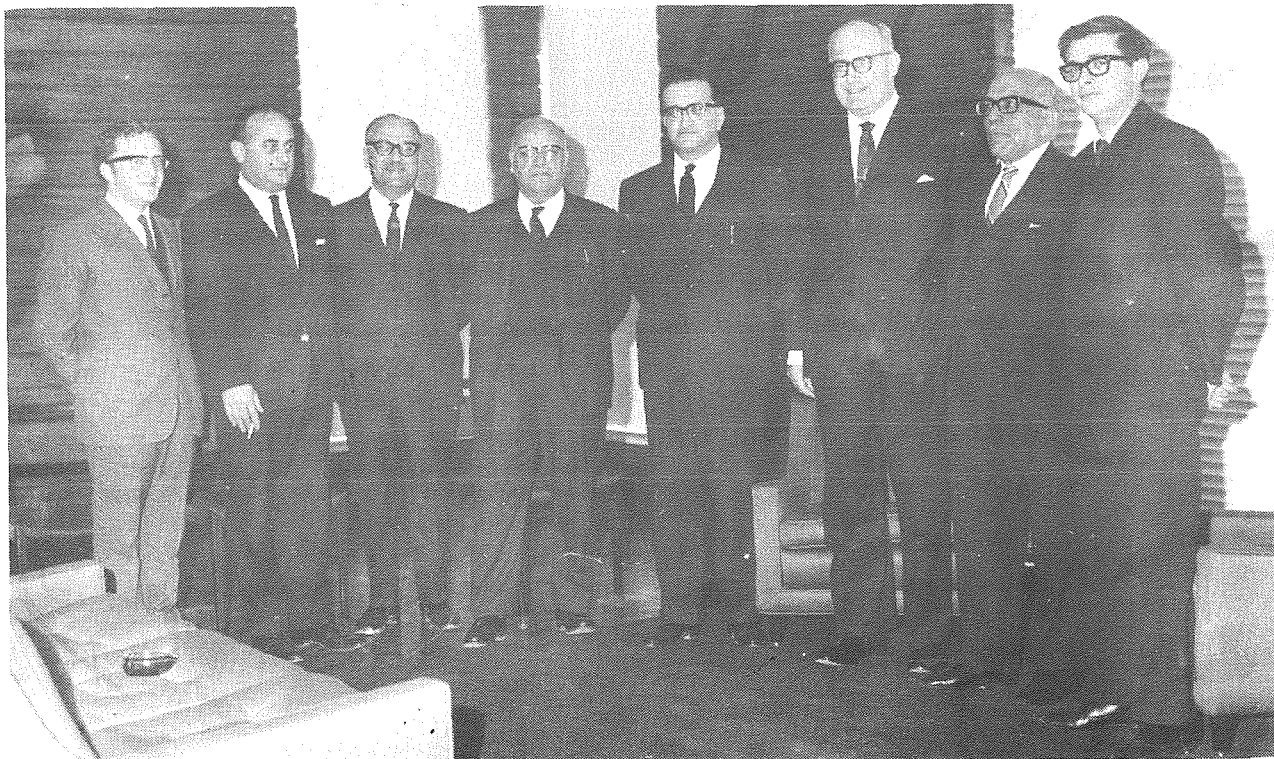
Further consultations with the Chamber of Pharmacists were made in 1970. Together they succeeded in making arrangements for the diploma course students to read for a degree and to ascertain that in future, the course of pharmacy would be a high standard, three year, degree course, at the Royal University of Malta at Tal-Qroqq, Msida. The Executive together with the Chamber of Pharmacists had made representations to the Council of the Royal University of Malta requesting that Pharmacy students be provided with better equipment, with qualified staff, proper laboratories, a good well stocked library and that more funds be allocated for the course of pharmacy. During that time a call for applications to fill the Chair of Pharmacy was issued.

Collaboration with International Bodies

The Malta Union of Pharmacists conscious of the importance of international relations tried its best to foster international contacts.

Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Relations with the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain were very close and friendly. It



Meeting with the Rector of University in 1968 discussing the future of the Pharmacy Course. From left to right: Dr. A. Serracino Inglott, at that time a pharmacy Student, Pharmacists Mr. E. Attard Bezzina, Mr. F. Formosa, Mr. W. Felice, Prof. E. Borg Costanzi, Rector of University, Dr. T.D. Whittet, Chief Pharmacist of U.K., Mr. A. Darmania, Hon. President of M.U.P. and Mr. M. Zarb Adami, at that time a Pharmacy Student.

was through their invaluable support to the Union's application for membership that Malta was able to join the Federation Internationale Pharmaceutique (F.I.P.)

Federation Internationale Pharmaceutique (F.I.P.)

The Malta Union of Pharmacists was accepted as an ordinary member of Federation Internationale Pharmaceutique during the twenty-first General Assembly held in Madrid in September 1966. M.U.P.'s President Mr. Darmania was later invited to the F.I.P. Council Meeting held in Toronto, Ontario on the 13th August 1967.

In 1968 the M.U.P. was for the first time represented by Mr. A. Darmania and Mr. F. Formosa at the F.I.P. Conference in Hamburg. Mr. R. Fava attended the Council meeting held in Bucharest in September 1969. The following year, Mr. J. Sciberras, M.U.P.'s President, attended the Council Meeting, General Assembly and Congress in Geneva. In 1974 the M.U.P.'s President, Mr. E. Mizzi, attended the General Assembly in Rome. This was the last meeting attended by officials of M.U.P. It ceased to be a member when the membership fee composed by

the F.I.P. on the local association made it prohibitive to remain a member.

International Conferences

Mr. E. Zammit and Mr. A. Gera de Petri represented the M.U.P. at the Giornale Farmaceutiche Italiani. The congress with the theme 'The Adjournment of the Pharmacist and his Profession' was held in Bari between the 30th April and 4th May 1969.

Mr. Sciberras was M.U.P.'s delegate to the Nigerian Pharmaceutical Society's conference held in Lagos, Nigeria, in November 1970.

C.P.A.

The first Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Conference was held in London in June 1969 with the aim of setting up of a Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association. During the conference, which was attended by Mr. J. Sciberras, it was decided that the Commonwealth countries are to be grouped into regions and each region was to hold a regional meeting. The first European region meeting of the C.P.A. was held in Malta between the 25th and 27th May 1970. This was a remarkable milestone in the history of the M.U.P.

The delegates for the meeting were Mr. A. Howells, President of C.P.A. and Mr. D.F. Lewis from Gibraltar, Mr. J. Kerr from N. Ireland and Mr. E. Zammit and Mr. J. Sciberras representing Malta. Various problems facing pharmacy in various European countries were discussed, and a report and suggestions were submitted to the Region Association's ad hoc committee which met in November 1970. Mr. J. Sciberras represented the European Region on the ad hoc committee held in Kampala, Uganda.

Mr. Eric Zammit attended the C.P.A. Conference in 1974.

C.M.T.U.

The M.U.P. was a full member of the C.M.T.U. In 1971 a memorandum was sent to the Confederation to be included in a memorandum which the C.M.T.U. intended sending to all Political Parties.

Publications

The journal of the Malta Union of Pharmacists was issued between October 1967 and October 1971. The Editor of the journal was Mr. E. Attard Bezzina.

Social Events

The Christmas Dinner was the annual social event which was attended by a large number of pharmacists and their guests.

Pharmacy Week 1968

A pharmacy week was organised so that pharmacists and the general public will become aware of the role of the pharmacist and the service he gives to the community. (An exhibition was organised to portray the historical and cultural aspects of the profession and the recent progress achieved.)

Dr. T.D. Whittet, the Chief Pharmacist of the U.K. Ministry of Health, was invited to give advice to improve education and practice of pharmacy. He submitted suggestions on the draft of bills to the Minister of Health.

Dr. T.W. Whittet delivered lectures to both pharmacists and the general public.

At Long Last!

On the occasion of the 10th Anniversary celebrations, Mr. A. Darmania, founder member, first President and great helper of the M.U.P., was claimed Hon. President of the Union for life and was presented with a special certificate to mark the occasion.

10th Anniversary Celebrations

On the occasion of the 10th Anniversary, the M.U.P. organised a programme of activities between the 23-25 April 1971. The activities commenced with a meeting for Pharmacists and their guests at the Medical School.

Mr. A. Darmania, Hon. President of MUP delivered an address on the ethics of pharmacy. The well known Maltese historian, Dr. P. Cassar, delivered a talk on the practice of pharmacy in the Maltese Islands in bygone days.

A congress was held, among the guest speakers were Dr. B. Bernard of the Department of Health, Dr. A. Jaccarini, Department of Pharmacy, Mr. F. Felice, President of the Chamber of Pharmacists, and Mr. A. Darmania, Chief Government Pharmacist.

Chamber of Pharmacists

Relations with the Chamber of Pharmacists were excellent. Indeed they worked together hand in hand on various endeavours.

In 1971 the Malta Union of Pharmacists extended its assistance to the Chamber to try to become a member of the Association of Professional Bodies which had recently been set up in Malta, through the medium of the Commonwealth Foundation.

In 1974, the 14th Annual General Meeting was held for the first time at the Confederation of Professional Bodies, Paceville.

L-GHAQDA TA' L-ISPIZJARA MALTIN

On the 15th June 1977, during the annual general meeting of the Chamber, a motion was proposed for the amalgamation of the M.U.P. and Chamber of Pharmacists into one association. Although it was best to have two associations working separately for the same objectives, in practice it was getting difficult to find different people to sit on the committees and certain things were being discussed by the same persons twice. It was felt that the time had come to have one strong association that represented all pharmacists.

The motion was approved and 'L-Ghaqda ta' l-Ispizjara Maltin' came into being. Its headquarters were at the Federation of Professional Bodies, Paceville.

Its aims were:

- to uphold the honour and to promote the standard of the profession.

— to look after the interests of its members.

The President and 8 members are elected during the annual general conference. The officials except the President are chosen by the Council during the first Council meeting.

The Council is made up of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and three other members.

CHAMBER OF PHARMACISTS — TRADE UNION

In 1979 the statute was amended, the name of the association was changed to Chamber of Pharmacists — Trade Union, 'Kamra ta' l-Ispizjara Maltin — Trade Union'.

The aims are:

- to uphold the honour and to promote the standard of the profession.
- to look after the interests of its members particularly the working conditions of pharmacists with the pharmacy owners who are not pharmacists and/or with the companies that employ them.
- the association is made up mainly of workers and thus should be registered as a Trade Union.

Importance has been given to students so much so that representatives of the students can attend and join in the discussion at the meetings. These student representatives do not have any voting power.

Endeavours

The Chamber of Pharmacists — Trade Union keeps adjourned about the current state of the profession and on the legislation of the pharmacy profession. 'Cette adire' the Chamber of Pharmacists is committed to criticise and in certain instances show dissatisfaction whenever there is something concerning the profession.

As a result of its continued efforts, the health authorities issued legal notice no. 85/81 which controls the advertising of medicinals.

A matter of great concern was the bulk buying scheme for medicine and the withdrawal of licences for the importation of vitamins as a prelude to this scheme in 1984. In a press release the Chamber insisted that vitamins are essential medicines and together with all medicines could not be treated like other items of commerce. On the drug importation it declared its belief that the primary aim is the health of the patient which is better served, if there is no monopoly

Chamber of Pharmacists — Trade Union

Mr. E. Zammit	1977-1979
Mr. M. Zarb Adami	1979-1980
Ms. M. Pace O'Shea nee Debattista	1980-1981
Ms. M. Brincat nee Gatt	1981-1987
Ms. M.A. Sant Fournier nee Felice	1987-
Ms. M.J. Cutajar nee Schembri	1978-1979
Ms. M. Brincat nee Gatt	1979-1981
Ms. M. Parascandolo nee Cardona	1981-1983
Ms. M. Dalli nee Galea	1983-1984
Dr. D. Camilleri Novak	1984-1985
Ms. M.A. Ciappara	1985-

either by Government or private practice.

The Minister of Health after meeting a delegation from the Chamber agreed in principle that new pharmacies should be owned by a pharmacist and that the population ratio should be considered when granting new permits. In 1984 several new regulations were issued on community pharmacy, these included some of the Chamber's recommendations.

The Chamber regrets that these regulations were capriciously removed without any consultations at all. The Chamber issued two press releases and had various meetings with the Ministers concerned to rectify these regulations. After the introduction of the control card system the Chamber pointed out a number of points which must be looked into.

The Chamber on various occasions has appealed for the reconstruction of the Pharmacy Board (to its original 13 members) in a manner which will ensure the adequate representation of the pharmacy profession so that the original objectives can be achieved.

The Chamber throughout the years has tried to establish the new role of the pharmacist, to dispense medicines and give advice in order to improve therapeutic results. Unfortunately some pharmacies are mismanaged and although legislation defining the running of pharmacies exist, it has not been enforced. Continually efforts for the constitution of pharmacies inspectors are being made.

As the M.U.P. had done in earlier years, the Chamber feels that the pharmacist's responsibility and service should be recognised financially by the official approval of a dispensing fee.

Following the decision by the extraordinary general meeting of January 1987, the Chamber

approved a list of tariffs, with an aim of standardising fees charged for extemporaneous preparations and a fee when psychotropic and narcotic drugs on the control card system are dispensed. The implementation of this fee has been postponed pending discussion.

The Chamber has discussed the proposal for the opening of Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning by a new roster, which it feels is more convenient to the general public. This roster has been approved by the Department of Health and the Chamber looks forward to its being implemented in the near future.

The Chamber has on several occasions intervened when the situation was judged to be of possible detriment to a section of its members. A subcommittee has recently met Hospital and ex-Hospital pharmacists to discuss problem areas. During various meetings with the authorities concerned, the need was brought up for an upgrading of the profession. A study on the restructuring of the Government Pharmaceutical Services is being prepared.

The Chamber has always helped members in need by providing legal acumen and support.

Education

With reforms in education in 1978, the student worker scheme was introduced in pharmacy. Considering the circumstances, the Chamber was in favour of these reforms with reservations. On various occasions the Chamber met the Minister and the students. In the interests of the students only, the Chamber did its best for the employment of available Maltese academics and for foreign lecturers to come to Malta. On two occasions the Chamber met Prof. Booth of UK who was in Malta, who offered his full cooperation.

In the following years the Chamber tried to find private sponsors for the student worker scheme. Contacts were made with the education authorities and Acting Head of the Department of Pharmacy when the course of pharmacy did not start.

A committee made up of representatives of the Chamber, and departments of Health and Education, made recommendations on how the B.Pharm. course could be restructured and organised.

A detailed analysis of the student worker scheme in Pharmacy was presented in a report in 1986.

The Chamber has since 1978, insisted on the appointment of a pharmacist as head of the de-

partment of pharmacy, in its various meetings with the authorities concerned. Due to the many shortcomings in pharmacy education the Chamber is striving for its complete reorganisation and is planning to hold a seminar on Pharmacy Education on January 17th 1988 to discuss such important issues as the establishment of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Curriculum, Post-graduate Education and Continuing Education for Consulting Pharmacists.

Continuing Education Programmes

In view of the rapidly increasing body of knowledge related to Pharmaceutical Sciences learning does not cease at the point of graduation but is a life-long process. The Chamber of Pharmacists has long realised that continuing education is an integral part of the profession. Indeed in 1981 it took the initiative and started the first series of extension studies. A subcommittee is responsible for the yearly organisation of these programmes and other update lectures.

Pharmacists Against Drug Abuse

The Chamber in 1986 established contact with PADA Foundation (Pharmacists Against Drug Abuse), an American Foundation which succeeded in educating hundreds of thousands of people about the danger of drug abuse. A subcommittee was formed, which in collaboration with Caritas, organised a course with the specific aim of providing current information on Drug Abuse. Since then two forums have been organised.

National Contacts

Caritas Association for Drug Prevention and Action. The Chamber, fully aware of the contribution pharmacists can give, has two delegates as its representatives, in the Caritas Association for Drug Prevention and Action.

C.M.T.U.

The Chamber of Pharmacists in 1985 affiliated again with the C.M.T.U. as a free member.

The Chamber has one representative on the Council, and participates in the activities organised by the C.M.T.U.

Pharmaceutical Students Association

The Chamber is in close contact with the Pharmaceutical Students Association and is looked at as an extremely valuable source of talented and enthusiastic future members of the Chamber.

The Chamber did its best to find sponsors for students who came to Malta in the students exchange programme. Indeed last year three sponsors were found for these students.

International Contacts

The Chamber of Pharmacists is still affiliated to C.P.A. During the Regional Meeting of this Association in 1978 which was held in Malta, special consideration was given to the problems facing pharmacy in Malta.

A booklet dealing with the topic was published as a result of this conference. Mr. Zammit represented the Chamber at the CPA conference meeting in Trinidad, and in Nairobi in 1987.

Publications

A White paper on education in 1980.

The journal 'The Pharmacist' since 1981.

A study on the student worker scheme in Pharmacy in 1986.

Memorandum in 1987 which is a synthesis of the policy of the Chamber of Pharmacists.

Social Events

For years the Chamber's sole annual occasion was the Christmas Dinner/Party. The need for more social occasions had long been felt among pharmacists. In 1985 the Chamber organised its first summer barbeque and since then, it has become the annual summer event.

CONCLUSION

When we analyse the history of the Malta Union of Pharmacists and the Chamber of Pharmacists — Trade Union, we find that pharmacy was and still is facing a number of National and International problems some of which are of long standing.

The objectives of the M.U.P. and the Chamber of Pharmacists — Trade Union as laid down in the statute are the same. Faced with similar problems, the approach taken by the Chamber in keeping with the needs of modern times has of necessity laid greater emphasis on the professional development of pharmacists.

As in most associations there tend to be times of low activity and during the last years of the M.U.P. and the initial years of the Chamber of Pharmacists — Trade Union, the two associations went through such a phase. In 1979, Ms Mintoff in her thesis 'An evaluation of the role

of the Pharmacist in Health Service in Malta', captured some of the qualities of that time "... the society's range of activities is limited, publications are non-existent and funds are low, all of which combine in turn to make membership recruitment difficult."

Since then there has been an increase in the activities of the Chamber including the publication of 'The Pharmacist', all of which lead to an increase in membership. Indeed in 1987 there was a record membership of 87.

The Chamber in response to modern developments in pharmacy in 1981 started to organise a Continuing Education programme. The subjects were carefully chosen with the community pharmacist in mind. Also, the Chamber, aware of the increase of Drug Abuse in Malta, has taken an active role through the subcommittee PADA.

The increase in need in communication has been a driving force in the organisation of its activities, both social and educational, which have also been extended to other professionals through the organisation of fora.

Pharmacy is one of the oldest professions and though it has evolved and developed over the years, the ethical standards of our profession have remained unchanged. On the 10th Anniversary of the MUP, Mr. Darmania said that ethics "are primarily a matter of conviction and personal discipline... We must remember of our strong responsibility to give a good service to the public..." "It is for each and every pharmacist to fashion his behaviour for the welfare of the community, it is our duty and privilege to serve."

The role of the pharmacist has changed but our responsibilities that have been handed down to us from the past have not.

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