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TREATING OF SCHIZOPHRENIA IN MALTA

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Malta is a small country in the middle of the Mediterranean. It is a member of the European Union and has a population of around 400,000. The culture is European, and around 99% of the population is Roman Catholic. There are no studies on the prevalence of schizophrenia in the Maltese population, but it is most likely that it is about 1%. During the last few years, thousands of illegal immigrants from Africa have been arriving in Malta especially during summer. It seems that the prevalence of schizophrenia in this subgroup is more than that in the local population. Studies are needed to study this phenomenon further to see if this is the case, but they are definitely being a big burden on the local psychiatric services. The National Health Service in Malta provides all treatment for schizophrenia free of charge. The pharmacological management of schizophrenia is similar to that of other European countries. Oral atypical antipsychotics are available within the National Health Services, but depot preparations are not yet available. For admissions there is a main Psychiatric Hospital, Mount Carmel Hospital, and two units in two General Hospitals. Community services are in the process of being developed. An NGO association, the Richmond Foundation also provides community and rehabilitation services. The Maltese family is still a relatively strong unit, with a lot of support in times of help being provided by the extended family. Thus in most psychosocial interventions, the family plays a central role.