

The Pharmaceutical Unit

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The unit implements local legislation and fulfils international obligations with respect to narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. It is also responsible for the development and setting of policies in various pharmaceutical areas, as well as for the implementation and monitoring of the set policies.

The national availability of medicines is monitored by the Pharmaceutical Unit. The Malta Medicines List (MML) is kept updated with all the medicines authorised to be placed on the market. The list is a national formulary which includes those medicines authorised by the local Medicines Authority as well as those authorised by the European Medicines Agency which are imported and placed on the Maltese market. Such monitoring together with the implementation of the 'Guidelines for the supply of medicinal products for human use through processes which are not covered by the Medicines Act, 2003 and its subsidiary legislation', ensure that the public's pharmaceutical needs are met.

The MML provides information useful for both the health care professional and the patient, with the aim of improving the rational use of medicines. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), rational medicines use requires that patients

receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet their individual requirements, for an adequate period of time, and at the lowest possible cost to them and their community. The Pharmaceutical Unit has the mission of empowering health professionals and consumers to use medicine in a therapeutically sound and cost-effective manner.

Following European Union accession, Malta transposed the EU legislation into the Medicines Act 2003 and its subsidiary legislation, so that the medicinal products available are all up to the European Union standards of quality i.e. as demanded by the Directive 2001/83/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 November 2001 on the Community code relating to medicinal products for human use.

By ensuring the quality, safety and efficacy of medicinal products, patient safety is enhanced. The Pharmaceutical Unit supports such regulations and deals with medicine policies which safeguard the patients' rights and wellbeing, and which boost the healthcare professionals' confidence in the medicinal products available, from their manufacture to administration and use by the patient.

Figure 1. Functions of the Pharmaceutical Unit

