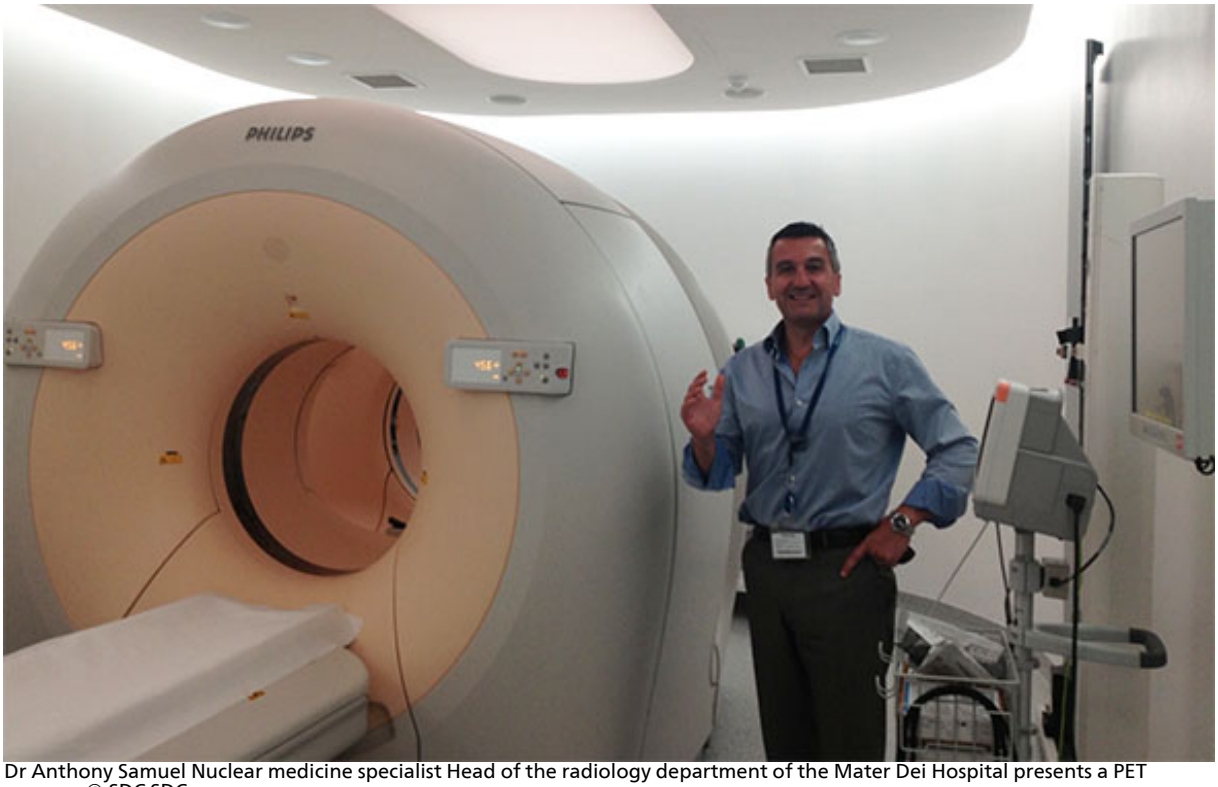
A giant leap forward in enhancing the diagnosis of cancer

Project completed



Dr Anthony Samuel Nuclear medicine specialist Head of the radiology department of the Mater Dei Hospital presents a PET scanner. © SDC SDC

The installation of a modern tomograph in the public hospital in Malta affords access to improved cancer diagnosis for the general public. Until now, patients requiring cancer diagnostic facilities were obliged either to travel abroad or go to a private clinic. Many of Malta's inhabitants found this impossible for financial reasons. This project therefore reduces inequalities in the Maltese healthcare system.

Country/region	Topic	Period	Budget
Malta	Improving social security Hospital modernisation	01.03.2010 - 31.05.2013	CHF 2'794'000

Modern CT scanner for Malta

In order to treat cancer efficiently and successfully, a modern diagnostic infrastructure is necessary. In Malta this infrastructure is only available in one private clinic. As a result, for financial reasons large sections of the Maltese population have not had access to modern cancer diagnostic facilities, as patients must pay for any treatment abroad or in the private clinic themselves.

A new, modern cancer diagnostic facility

To treat cancer effectively it is first of all necessary to locate tumours and determine what parts of the body are affected. The radiological infrastructure for early diagnosis of cancer in Malta was inadequate. Positron Emission Tomography (PET) is a new, quick and precise method of diagnosing cancer. However, PET scans are very expensive.

Equal access for all citizens

As a result of the project, a modern PET scanner was financed and installed in Malta's primary public healthcare facility, the Mater Dei Hospital. The installation of this PET scanner in a public hospital, i.e. as part of Malta's public healthcare services, contributes to providing the population with equal access to medical care. The poorer segments of the Maltese population no longer has to pay for this therapy themselves as the government healthcare service will reimburse patients the costs of oncological treatment in the hospital. This is also the first step towards setting up an independent oncology centre in this hospital. Maltese radiologists have enhanced their knowledge of the PET/CT scanner thanks to the transfer of knowledge and experience with the Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland (IOSI), of the regional hospital in Bellinzona.

Thanks to the project:

•a PET scanner in the public Mater Dei Hospital in Malta is installed

• access to improved cancer diagnostic facilities for the entire population of Malta, regardless of their financial situation is ensured

• cancer diagnosis and treatment on Malta is improved

• the establishment of an independent oncology centre in the Mater Dei Hospital is promoted

• personnel to use the PET scanner is trained

Switzerland is supporting this project to the tune of 2.8 million francs from the funds of the Swiss enlargement contribution. Since the installation of the tomograph in the "Mater Dei" public hospital at the beginning of 2013, approximately 10,000 scans have been carried out. Now, following the completion of the project, maintenance and personnel costs will be taken over in full by Malta's public health system.

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