

MY INTERNSHIP IN THE HEALTH PROMOTION&DISEASE PREVENTION DIRECTORATE

The Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Directorate offers different approaches to promote healthy lifestyle across all age groups. One mode is by implementing various strategies across Malta to promote everyone's awareness. This directorate provides outreaches and internal discussions with other ministries, companies, radio stations, use local TV and other social networks in order to promote a better quality of life for the Maltese citizens.

TASK 1:

I was given an opportunity to experience ways how the organisation promotes healthy lifestyle to the employees of the Ministry for Finances in the capital city Valletta. The purpose for promoting healthy lifestyle is to provide nutritional advice to members of staff in order to improve the way they eat to stay healthy. I was involved in the promotional activities and our team presented various promotional materials at which we gave people during the advice. For instance, about eating more varied food and showing employees how to use healthy plate method, also we explained why it is important to drink plenty of water, what are the benefits of exercise and the reasons for quitting smoking. Furthermore, we measured height and weight of workers and calculated the body mass index (BMI). Based on the results of BMI, we explained them in which category each of them belonged and what they could do to improve their reading. After that, we gave everyone our contact details for whenever they will have any questions or need additional advice.



TASK 2:

One other activity in which I took part in was promoting healthy lifestyle by visiting Malta Television at PBS (TVM - <http://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/>). My mentor and other colleagues recorded a radio show about adequate eating in the summer season. They explained to Maltese citizens the importance of drinking plenty of water, exercise and eating healthy food at least four servings of normal portions per day involving vegetables, fruit, dairy products, wholemeal cereals products, lean meat, fish, eggs, legumes, nuts, seeds and etc. Furthermore, for healthy lifestyle it is important to eat seasonal, fresh and to minimize processed foods while encouraged to prepare fresh and homemade dishes contain significantly higher amounts of protective nutrients and substances that benefit to health. The radio show took about 40 minutes and I had opportunity to observe the whole process from the beginning of setting everything up until the end of the recording process.



TASK 3:

The third activity of promoting healthy lifestyle was to visit a well known local Maltese's organisation called *ST Microelectronics*. On the first day, me with my colleagues carried out a number of activities for their employees such as measuring their blood pressure, blood glucose, weight, height and body mass index (BMI). Our team gave information on how to improve their lifestyle in order to become healthier and how to keep their blood pressure, glucose and BMI within normal limits. On the second day our team of colleagues prepared Power Point presentation about healthy lifestyle which presented the importance of healthy nutrition (including the healthy plate) and what to try and avoid from your diet, reasons for quitting smoking and keeping active.





The three different promotions were educational and interesting experiences for me. I am thankful to have had an opportunity like this where I met new people and exchanged our knowledge.

TASK 4:

I visited to the Centre *Dar Kenn ghal Sahhtek* for eating disorders and obesity. The centre is aimed to provide a holistic treatment of patients with eating disorders problems mainly anorexia, bulimia, and uncontrolled eating disorder. The length of stay at the residential home varies according to individual's needs, usually lasting around 8 weeks on an average. They have connections with the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Department, which assists and support them with treatments and advice of how to improve the quality of their lifestyle and to become healthier. I attended two of the meetings with people who have obesity problems. On every Monday there is a small group of people attending for measurements to have their weight and waist circumference to check up on their progress. Every patient receives suitable treatment for their needs and they are provided with information about healthy eating. Furthermore, the nutritional advisors illustrates patients how to prepare and cook meals the healthiest way. They have a kitchen facility available where everyone can cook together.



I visited one of their lessons and helped them with preparing food for lunch and dinner. Also, I had the opportunity to discuss with them about the treatment and how it works. They told me that the organization on the day is highly organised; both in the careful management of the meals and in planning activities aimed at making patients regain a correct eating pattern. They also have a common therapeutic programme where it is possible to discuss about own feelings, problems, even share their life experience and what they want to change. I am glad to have had an opportunity like this because meeting people who have obesity and other personal or family problems I realized that my own life problems are tiny in comparison. Sometimes

we worry too much for small things and we forget to look from a more positive side.

TASK 5: NATIONAL FOOD CONSUMPTION SURVEY

Further to my experience in Malta, I had the opportunity to be involved in the National Food Consumption Survey, which it had started on April 2015. The principal aims of this survey is to document the eating habits of 1,000 adults and 300 children. Results of the survey will help to reduce and prevent certain illnesses. Over a half of the elderly population suffers from high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, which may be a result of unsuitable dietary practices. The survey would serve as a basis for educational campaigns and for the creation of a preventive health system. Also, the survey focuses on the different food groups eaten as well as activity levels and socio-economic backgrounds of interviewees.

The weight, height and waist circumference of the interviewees are measured and the body mass index (BMI) is calculated. The interview is carried out twice within 6 weeks and a 24 hour recall for food and beverage is recorded. All results are about what they eat are put in specific software GloboDiet re built with WHO support about what the Maltese population eats. A 24 hour urine collection needs to be collected to verify the levels of salt. Each interview is carried out face-to-face. Also the interviewers get all instructions about questionnaire for interviewees. I had the opportunity to observe how my mentor and other colleagues educate and instruct new interviewers of how to better conduct interviews. My mentor showed them how to measure height, weight and waist circumferences on the right way to the interviewees. There are some rules about that. Firstly, a very important rule is to



have the right and calibrated equipment, like mobile portable stadiometer, electronic weighing scale and non-elastic tape measure. Secondly, for measuring height, weight and waist circumferences are some protocols.

Height is measured without shoes, heavy outer garments and hair ornaments. The back of the head, shoulder blades, buttocks and heels are touching the stadiometer. The reading of the height should be done at eye level.

Protocol for measuring weight include to measure without heavy outer garments, shoes and empty

pockets. The scale should be placed on a hard floor and participant should stand still on the centre of the platform. Waist circumference is used as an indicator of abdominal obesity and for measuring is needed to find the right measurement place – midway between the lower rib margin and the iliac crest. Sometimes it is not easy to find the right measurement place. The participant is asked to breathe normally; the reading is taken at the end of light exhale. In the case if height, weight and waist circumference is not measured, the reason should be specified and recorded. Otherwise if there are any problems with mentioned survey, usually Health promotion department calls World Health Organization (WHO) and discuss about what is the best way to cope with problems.

One of the parts of this survey involved taking photos of every product available on supermarket shelves and food outlets. Later we were inputting the nutritional information of those products available in store and food outlets in GloboDiet. Me, my mentor and our colleagues, we went to the two different stores and photographed some product brands and their nutritional information. Then the next step was to put product's information in Excel and GloboDiet. This step is important because we can see what the typical Maltese diet looks like. This project is still not finished yet.

