THE MMA telegram

ISSUE 10 – Q2 2022

Welcome dear colleagues for our second e-newsletter for year 2022!

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EVENTS

Med Cann World Forum 2022

(5-6 April 2022)

The forum was addressed by the Chairperson and Dr Dylan Said providing extensive knowledge on latest medical advancements and psychedelics industries, and promoted quality manufacturing, research, and innovation in the field of medicinal cannabis.

The multi-faceted event focused on the following six (6) pillars:

Medical	Regulatory
Legislation	Education
Business	Research

Seminar on Monkeypox

(13 June 2022)

The MMA Academy for Patient Centred Excellence and Innovation in Regulatory Sciences organised an engaging face-to-face seminar which served as a key platform for interdisciplinary exchange of expertise, response plans and ideas on Monkeypox.

The seminar was opened by Hon Dr Jo Etienne Abela, chaired by Prof Anthony Serracino-Inglott and addressed by Prof Charmaine Gauci, Dr Chris Barbara, Dr Charles Mallia Azzopardi and Prof Michael Borg, who discussed the epidemiology, case notification and surveillance; laboratory diagnosis; clinical diagnosis and management; and infection transmission and prevention as related to Monkeypox.

Virtual Live Seminar on Devices for Self-Testing for COVID-19

In view of the published *Standards for the importation, sale and use of devices for self-testing for COVID-19 by the public*, the MMA hosted two online seminars in April 2022, highlighting the criteria for validation of devices for self-testing for COVID-19, purchase and sale requirements of these in-vitro diagnostic medical devices. Distributors and importers were guided on the process to notify the Authority by means of submitting the application form MT-MDF10. A guidance document was presented to assist stakeholders in the process of COVID-19 self-tests. The Self-Test List is available on the Authority's website.

EVENTS

The Malta Medicines Authority Staff Meeting

(12 April 2022)

Team building activities were organised with the aim of further bolstering engagement, accountability, motivation and promoting creative thinking amongst the Authority's employees. The Chairperson thanked all the employees for their remarkable contribution and commitment which has ensured the continuity of the work towards the availability of safe, quality and effective medicinal products. A representative from Richmond Foundation, highlighted the importance of having a healthy work-life balance through strategies which decrease multiple stressors at work ultimately improving the ability of performing well at your workplace.

Visit from the Minister and Permanent Secretary

(10 June 2022)

The main goals and objectives of the MMA, including the Authority's corporate roles, responsibilities and achievements were discussed positively in a patient-centred manner with the Minister for Active Ageing, Hon Dr Jo Etienne Abela and the Permanent Secretary Ms Christine Schembri since the MMA now falls within their portfolio.

GENERAL MMA UPDATES

European Immunisation Week

(24-30 April 2022)

The MMA participated in the European Immunisation Week with the theme 'Long Life for All'. This global awareness week is organised yearly with the aim of increasing the overall vaccination coverage by highlighting the importance of immunisation which increases the life-expectancy of people of all ages against vaccine-preventable infectious diseases.

Annual Report 2021

The Annual Report 2021 reflects the robustness, resilience and quality of our people and portfolio. The yearly annual report is a corporate document which is disseminated amongst stakeholders to evaluate the Authority's performance by disclosing milestones, operations, statistical data, and scientific initiatives achieved and pursued by the MMA over the previous year.

DID YOU KNOW?

Our eyes can distinguish up to 10 million colour surfaces and take in more information than the largest telescope known to man.

International Clinical Trials Day

(20 May 2022)

The MMA participated in the International Clinical Trials day to support the regulatory harmonisation of clinical trials in the European Union (EU). The new Clinical Trials Regulation (CTR) and Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS) aim to further enhance transparency, medical research, and innovation in this field of study.

GENERAL EUROPEAN UPDATES

General Updates	Description
Cancer Medicines Forum with academia to optimise cancer treatments	In collaboration with academic organisations and the European Medicines Regulatory Network, this forum aims to **reinforce and foster high standards of research for cancer treatments in clinical practice in the EU**.
Enhanced accessibility of Insulin for non-EU patients	The Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) has recommended the use of two (2) diabetes mellitus treatment, **Actrapid® and Insulatard® outside the EU**. In collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the target country with limited regulatory resources, the Agency assessed the quality, safety, and efficacy of the medicines and concluded that both insulin products can be stored at temperatures up to 30°C for a maximum of four (4) weeks.
First Meeting of the Medicines Shortages and Safety of Medicinal Products (MSSG)	The EMA MSSG was established under Regulation 2022/123 and is responsible to ensure a **proactive and vigorous response to issues impacting the quality, safety, efficacy** and the **continuity of supply of medicinal products and medical devices** during crisis events including public health emergencies. On the 7 of June, the EMA adopted a list of medicinal products considered to be critical during the public health emergency (the 'public health emergency critical medicines list').
First therapies to treat rare genetic disorders	The EMA has recommended the granting of a marketing authorisation in the EU for **Xenpozyme® (olipudase alfa), Upstaza® (eladocagene exuparvovec) and Zokinvy® (lonafarnib) therapies** for the treatments of Niemann-Pick disease, Aromatic L-amino acid decarboxylase (AADC) deficiency and Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome or progeroid (rare premature aging syndromes) respectively.
Monkeypox Vaccine Updates	The EMA has announced that CHMP will start reviewing data for the extension of the **Smallpox Vaccine (Imvanex®)** marketing authorisation to protect people from the Monkeypox virus. **Imvanex®** is considered a potential vaccine for the Monkeypox virus due to the similarity between the Smallpox and Monkeypox viruses.
Supporting the development of new antibiotics	The EMA evaluates the development of **new antimicrobial medicines and antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** which is a global health threat. Regulators in the EU, the United States and Japan have aligned their respective data requirements with the aim that medicine developers can design clinical trials that meet the evidence needs of multiple regulatory agencies.

Updates related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Updates	Description
No link between mRNA COVID-19 vaccines and autoimmune hepatitis	Following Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) reports, the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) concluded that the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines **(Comirnaty® and Spikevax®)** do not cause Autoimmune Hepatitis (AIH).
Authorisation of Evusheld®, COVID-19 medicine	The EMA has granted a marketing authorisation for **Evusheld® (Tixagevimab and Cilgavimab)**, developed by AstraZeneca AB, for the prevention of COVID-19 in adults and adolescents from 12 years of age weighing 40kg.
Rolling Review for COVID-19 Vaccine HIPRA (PHH-1V)	The CHMP has started the rolling review for **HIPRA (PHH-1V) vaccine** which is indicated as a booster for adults who have already been fully vaccinated with an mRNA and/or an adenovirus COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine contains two forms of part of the receptor binding domain which corresponds to part of the spike protein of the alpha variant and beta variant, and an adjuvant which helps strengthen the immune response to the vaccine.
Rolling Reviews for COVID-19 Vaccines	The EMA has started a rolling review for **Comirnaty® and Spikevax®** COVID-19 vaccines which are adapted to provide better protection against a specific variant or variants of SARS-CoV-2.

Regulating Medical Devices: Shortage of Notified Bodies

In 2017, the European Union published the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) (EU) 2017/745 and In-Vitro Diagnostic Medical Devices Regulation (IVDR) EU) 2017/746 repealing the 1990s directives covering medical devices, implantable medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic medical devices. This change from directives to regulations was required in order to further strengthen and harmonise the regulatory framework in relation to medical devices with the aim of improving patient safety in the field of medical devices across the European Union. The Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) (EU) 2017/745 entered into application on 26 May 2021 and the In-Vitro Diagnostic Medical Devices Regulation (IVDR) EU) 2017/746 entered into application on 26 May 2022. In August 2020, in line with Legal Notices 318-321 of 2020, the Malta Medicines Authority became the national competent authority for medical devices. The Medical Devices, Pharmaceutical Collaboration and Entrepreneurship Directorate is tasked with managing the regulatory framework which aims to safeguard the quality and safety of all devices that are made available on the local market by adopting the same strategy implemented for medicines and pharmaceutical products in accordance to national and European legislation. The Directorate proactively oversees procedures relating to registration of economic operators, notification of medical devices, vigilance and incident reporting, market surveillance and the continued implementation of the in-vitro diagnostic medical devices legislation in line with the European Union legislation keeping the patient at the centre of its activities.

The implementation of the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) (EU) 2017/745 and In-Vitro Diagnostic Medical Devices Regulation (IVDR) (EU) 2017/746 have posed several capacity challenges including shortages of Notified Bodies for medical devices. Notified bodies for medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics carry out conformity assessment procedures which assess that legislative requirements, testing, inspection and certification processes are in line with required European standards and regulations before placing the device on the market. Notified bodies issue a CE certificate for moderate to high risk medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics, confirming that the manufacturer has conformed to the relevant assessment criteria. For low risk class medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics, the manufacturer is responsible to carry out a self-assessment procedure and subsequently to affix the CE marking (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The CE Mark

Adopted from: European Commission. CE marking. [Internet]. Brussels: EC; 2021 [cited 2022 June 23]. Available from URL: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/ce-marking_en

The Medical Devices, Pharmaceutical Collaboration and Entrepreneurship Directorate is proactively addressing the issue of shortages of Notified Bodies for medical devices. Two applications for the designation as a Notified Body under the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) have been received by the Directorate. The designation process of a conformity assessment body (CAB) to become a Notified Body encompasses a rigorous process reviewing in detail relevant dossiers which culminates in the national competent authority leading the Joint Assessment Team audit prior to the designation stage. The Joint Assessment Team (JAT) includes members from the European Commission and two national experts from EU member states. The Directorate is committed to further supporting the establishment of Notified Bodies in the field of medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics in Malta and in its continued work towards the monitoring of the performance of designated Notified Bodies in this field. Research at doctoral level is being undertaken to address the challenges encountered in the designation of Notified Bodies in medical device regulatory sciences within the European Union.

Academia – Ongoing Doctorate Level Research Projects

Digitalisation of Regulatory Activities for Medical Devices

The study aims to evaluate current systems used for data reports and documentation for medical devices (MD) and to develop an approach for the implementation of the UDI and framework for digitalised regulatory services for MD, in conformity with current regulations. This study will use a mixed-method approach including interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) with the relevant stakeholders. The present system at the MDD is analysed through observation/explorative sessions and forms the basis for the establishment of FGD The transcription from the focus group discussion is grouped into themes and is used to facilitate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

Louella Bianca Ignas

Establishing a Patient Centred Medical Device Body

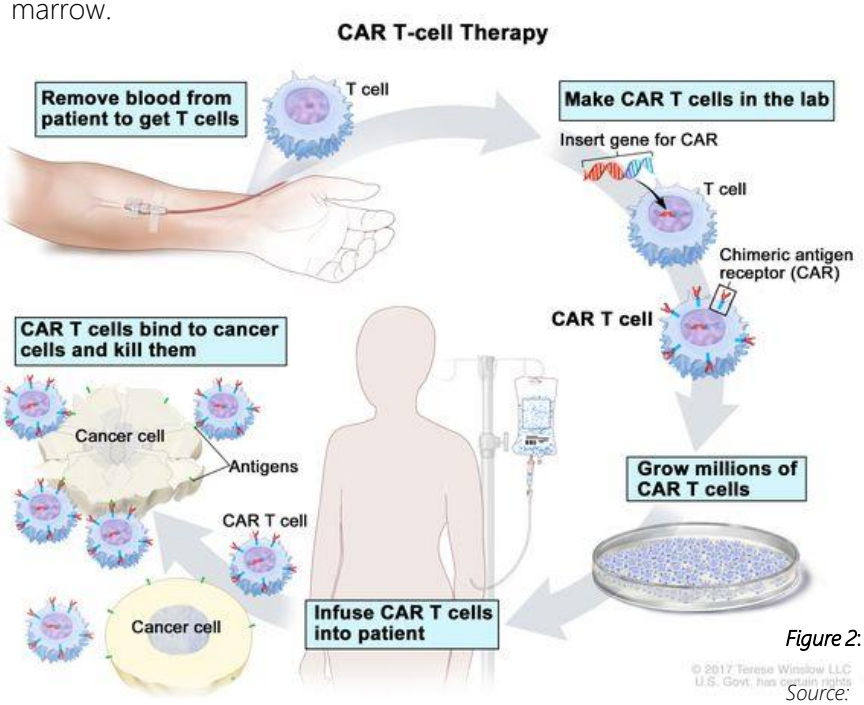
The aim of the research is to develop a framework for the transition of the legislation from the directives to the regulations by creating a body that is centred around patient safety. Facilitating the implementation and execution of the new regulations, ensuring all economic operators are in line and prepared to comply with the new stricter regulations.

Julian Fearne

Development of New/Emerging Therapy

New gene therapy for multiple myeloma - Carvykti®

The EMA has recommended a conditional marketing authorisation in the EU for Carvykti® (ciltacabtagene autoleucel) for the treatment of relapsed and refractory multiple myeloma in adult patients who have received at least three (3) therapies before and whose cancer has deteriorated since they received their last treatment. Multiple myeloma is a rare cancer of the plasma cells which result in abnormal and immature cells in the bone marrow.



Carvykti® is an advanced therapy for cancer, a Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy which is made using a patient's T cells. The (CAR) T-cells are grown in large numbers in the laboratory and given to the patient by infusion (Figure 2).

The most common side-effects of Carvykti® include cytokine release syndrome (CRS), a systemic response to the activation and proliferation of CAR-T cells which causes high fever and flu-like symptoms, infections and encephalopathy. In severe conditions, this syndrome can be life-threatening.

Figure 2: Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy
Source: https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/car-t-cell-therapy