



# Prevenzjoni u Kura Għalina

Issue 13

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE DEPARTMENT

December 2016

## Updates from the CEO's Office

The last few months have witnessed further developments within the department. The scope of these developments is that of improving the quality of care delivered to our clients as well as improving the working environment for our employees.



### New equipment

At both Birkirkara and Cospicua health centres **new heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems** replaced the old systems that were nearing their end of life service. The situation was leading to frequent breakdowns of the systems. This investment decreased the running and maintenance costs, and is now providing a better environment to patients and staff. The total capital investment for these systems was of €140,000.

New generators were installed at Rabat and Paola health centres. These will allow continuation of all services in both health centres should a power failure occur. This was achieved through a capital investment of €48,000.

**New waiting room chairs** were also acquired for Qormi health centre as well as for Birkirkara health centres.

A piped oxygen system was commissioned at Floriana Health Centre for the delivery of medical oxygen to our treatment room patients who require this treatment. This involved a capital expenditure of over €26,000. All health centres have also been supplied with air compressor machines for the delivery of nebuliser therapy. The appropriate guidelines have also been drawn up and distributed to all the health centres.

### Refurbishment

**Paola health centre** has continued to have various areas of the health centre refurbished and redesigned to enable an improved patient flow and throughput. One of the areas which has been recently refurbished is the podiatry area. This embellishment has also resulted in increased room availability and now there are 4 podiatry clinics instead of 3. The treatment room area has also been refurbished and upgraded to ensure an improved working environment for staff and clients alike.

### New services

During September of this year, **computer generated medical prescriptions** started to be issued from all health centres. This was a project that was run in conjunction with the Pharmacy of Your Choice. All health centres were provided with the necessary computers, printers and IT software so that this system could be rolled out. The new system will contribute towards patient safety in decreasing the possibility for medical

## Editorial

It is almost incredible how we were just starting off the year and we are suddenly nearing the end of another busy year. With the closing of the year, we each tend to take stock of what the year has offered and we have managed to accomplish during these 12 months, both professionally and personally.



The department has seen some further developments in the current services with extensions of service hours or the expansion into new health centres as well as the development of new services through the acquisition of new equipment and infrastructure. The updates section on this page will expand further on the work undertaken over the past months.

Of course, any service cannot be run without our valued members of staff with new employees joining our department and bringing their own expertise over the past months. Others who have delivered invaluable service, sometimes for long years, have moved into other areas or entities or have reached their retirement. To those who have come and gone, we would like to thank them for their service and welcome new employees on board. During this month, we will be holding the awards event for the health centre, employee and unit/section of the year and wish all those nominated the best of luck.

The physiotherapy department have also embarked on an interesting educational initiative this year with school children on the do's and don't of carrying their schoolbags and have also produced a leaflet to give to children. The short article included in this edition expands further on this.

So as the year draws to an end and another begins, we also take stock of the celebrations that have just taken place and the over indulgence that is often an inevitable consequence of the festive season. Some of us try to remedy with our new year's resolutions that often enough involve a weight loss journey. The article on fad diets written by Dr Mario Caruana will give us some guidance on the best way in which to lose weight and what to avoid to enhance our chances of success.

Another possible inevitable consequence of the festive season are aching feet with more social occasions to attend and more formal attire to wear. For the ladies this might mean standing for a substantial amount of time in high heeled shoes that would normally be left in our closets. The article by the podiatry department will focus on the foot health of children and how we can try to ensure that they avoid future problems.

Whilst hoping that you enjoy reading the contents of this Christmas edition, the editorial board would like to wish each and every one of you and your loved ones a wonderful festive season.

*Rebecca Cachia Fearne  
Dorothy Scicluna*

*continues on pg 2*

errors as well as eventually decreasing the time taken for a general practitioner to fill in a prescription. Dispensing of medications by pharmacists will also be safer as dispensing errors due to illegible prescriptions will be eliminated through computer generated printouts. This is in line with the department's drive to strengthen the IT services in the primary care sector.

### District Clinic (Bereġ) devolution

An exercise to re-engineer the opening hours of a large number of Bereġ was undertaken and implemented to reflect the patterns of usage in various localities that have developed over time. This re-engineering exercise allowed certain Bereġ to increase their opening hours since the demand on certain Bereġ had grown over the past few years.

Furthermore, the devolution process of the Bereġ continued with the localities of Safi, Sliema and Swieqi. The areas of Safi and Swieqi saw the service relocated from the old premises to the new Civic Centres. The service at Sliema Bereġ was temporarily relocated whilst the necessary works were carried out at the district clinic ensuring that the service delivery remained uninterrupted. Over and above the usual services, a new podiatry service was also launched at Safi Bereġ.

### Expansion of Services

The summer months saw the expansion or re-engineering of various services. The

**Chronic Kidney Disease Prevention Clinic** has expanded to Rabat health centre, thereby bringing the health centres from which the service is delivered to four. In fact, this service is now being provided from Qormi, Paola, Rabat and Ġzira health centres.

**The lifestyle clinics** have also increased the localities from where the service is being delivered. The service is now also available from the district clinics of Naxxar, Gharghur, Lija and from Birkirkara health centre. This has alleviated the load from areas such as San Ġwann and Msida, whilst also increasing the accessibility to clients who can now have the service closer to their area of residence.

In continuing to address the need for the delivery of holistic and timely primary health care, the **Chronic Disease Management Clinics** have expanded rapidly and these clinics are now available from five health centres with the most recent health centre being that of Cospicua. A once weekly **Cardiology clinic** run by GPs with a special interest in cardiology was also launched at Birkirkara health centre.

### Training

A series of information sessions for doctors and nurses on the services offered by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) were held during the months of June and July. The

scope of these sessions was to increase the awareness of health practitioners of the services being provided by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. This will ensure that clients who are identified to be in need of such services may be promptly referred to the appropriate service.

The training plan for 2016 for the Primary Health Care Department continued to be implemented and, over the past few months, more healthcare professionals have benefited from identified training initiatives that met the goals and objectives set in the National Health Systems Strategy.

A series of sessions regarding psychological support for all primary healthcare professionals and non-professional staff were held in collaboration with the Mental Health Services. These sessions were held at the Mount Carmel Training Centre and were delivered by the practice nurse for mental services and trainee psychologists. The scope of the sessions was to ensure identification and support of staff and clients who may require psychological support.

Finally, I wish to thank you for all your hard work and dedication throughout the year. Your sterling services are allowing our clients to benefit from high quality care. I augur you all the best for the coming Christmas season and New Year to you and your loved ones.

## 'Enjoy a healthy body... Maintain a healthy back'

### An initiative undertaken by the physiotherapy team during scholastic year 2015-2016

The physiotherapy department in collaboration with school health services within the Primary Health Care Department, has for the second consecutive year issued an invitation for a back care education programme to all year 5 students attending state and church schools. The aim of these talks is to raise awareness and to promote, educate and encourage behavioural changes towards a healthier lifestyle regarding posture, back care and physical activity in order to prevent back pain in this young population. The incidence of back pain and obesity in children is increasing and this is attributed in part to an increase in sedentary lifestyle and bad posture during daily activities. Back pain in children is likely to be a predictor of back pain in adulthood, which is recognised as being a major health problem worldwide.

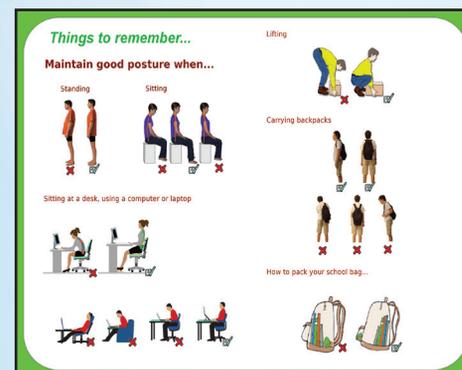
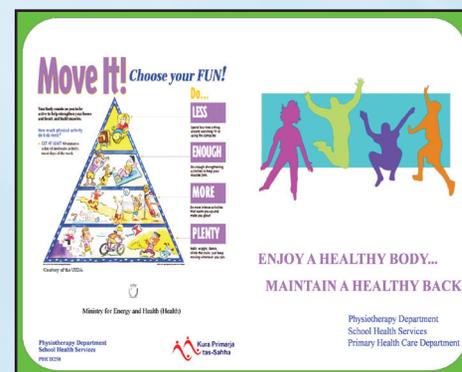
This year 25 schools accepted to participate in this health education programme which saw an increase from last scholastic year. In all 37 presentations were delivered

to the students. This encourages us to try and further increase participation next scholastic year. The programme covered basic anatomy of the spine, postures in standing, sitting and posture when using a computer, bending, lifting and lying together with the correct use of the schoolbag regarding carrying, packing and weight of the bag. The programme comprised of a PowerPoint presentation, a quiz, time for questions and a 3 minute physical activity to promote activity breaks between lessons. A handout was given to the children after the talk as a reminder of the main points of back care covered in the session.

The programme was well received by the students and teachers who showed interest, asked relevant questions and participated in and enjoyed the physical activity break session.

Thanks to the Primary Health Care Department, this year the children were given a colourful and attractive handout on correct posture and the physical activity pyramid.

The Physiotherapy Team



## Interview with Mr Mario Ellul, Manager Nursing Services

### 1. Can you please tell us something about yourself?

I am 47 years old and live in Lija. Originally from Valletta. Married since 1993 to Jacqueline and have two children: Erica and Ryan, 22 and 19 years old respectively.

### 2. Can you describe yourself in a single sentence?

I consider myself approachable, determined, analytical but authoritarian in appropriate circumstances.

### 3. How would you describe your management style?

I believe more in leadership and adopt an open door policy. One should provide a conducive environment enabling staff to feel part of the organisation with their opinions appreciated and valued. transformational leadership through emotional intelligence is key.

### 4. What personal qualities or characteristics do you value most in the field of nursing?

Nursing is about caring for the individuals who for some reason cannot perform daily living activities that he/she may perform if he/she had the necessary strength, will or knowledge. It's all about caring.

### 5. How would you describe the experience of working in primary care?

I have been here just over four months now and to be frank, I am surprised about the volume of work being done. We have a very good workforce, highly experienced and ready to do well. Looking forward to work with them.

As regard Primary Care, there is still room to explore. Primary care should be the fulcrum of health services and should take and consolidate this position on a strategic level.

### 6. What are your plans / vision for the nursing department in Primary Health Care (PHC)?

Nursing within the Primary Health Care Department is second to none. We need to excel in our services which should be based on clinical practices, teamwork and customer oriented in a holistic stance. To this end, efforts are and should be planned towards standardisation of clinical practices on which we are currently working to produce our handbook for clinical services. Moreover, and taking the opportunity presented through initiatives being taken within the Public Service, we will engage in available learning so that our workforce is better equipped to work within a multidisciplinary team and, excel in customer care.

### 7. What do you see as the most important strengths in nursing in PHC?

Experience. Most of our nurses have a wealth of knowledge and skills. We should treasure all this and capitalise on this to enhance services to our clients.

### 8. Are there any weaknesses in the nursing department that you are seeking to improve?

I believe that there should be more integration of services which at the end of the day are provided in a different manner from locations just a couple of kilometres away. We need to be coherent in what we do in a structural and strategic manner.

### 9. If you had to change your career, what would it be and why?

Psychology: It's intriguing, interesting how one can understand and explain behaviours.

### 10. You are alone in a deserted island and you can have only one object with you. What would it be?

Food



### 11. If you could meet any celebrity or other personality in the world, who would it be and why?

Susan Boyle: If she did it, then everyone can make it! Sheer determination, quality, humility. Inspirational!

### 12. What are your hobbies?

Watching TV.

### 13. Do you have a personal motto or philosophy that you go by?

Focus on the positive and not the negative. There is always a silver lining. 'Do not wait for the rain to stop but just learn to dance in the rain'.

### 14. Who is your favourite author and do you have a favourite book?

Victor Apap: Uljed tal-Azzar  
Harper Lee: To kill a Mockingbird

### 15. Any favourite movies / songs?

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers.

### 16. Do you practice any sports?

Are playstation and eating considered as sports? If not, then no!





*B'Kara Health Centre support towards Pink October events*



*Visit by Swedish delegation to Rabat health centre*



*New service of portacath flushing at B'Kara Health Centre*



Photo: DOI - Jason Borg

*Safi district clinic devolution*



Photo - DOI - Jeremy Wonnacott

*Santa Lucija Devolution*



*Team building activity head office*

## Autism-Friendly Mass

Kirsten Pulis

Allied Health Practitioner, Speech and Language Pathology

To mark Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month, the Autism Spectrum Disorders Specialised Division within the Speech-Language Department organized an Autism-Friendly mass at the University Chapel on the 24th of April 2016.

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder between the ages of 6 and 11 were invited to attend together with their families. Professionals who work with these children also joined. The mass, which was celebrated by Fr. Frankie Cini, was

supplemented by visual materials and an interactive gospel and homily. Mr. Patrick Wirth and Mrs. Louisa Frenedo-Wirth animated the mass, whilst the children and their families participated in the readings and offertory.

The Speech-Language Department wishes to thank the Chaplaincy team, Fr. Frankie Cini, Mr. Patrick Wirth and Mrs. Louisa Frendo-Wirth for their contribution to this event.



## Children's Footwear

Ivan Farrugia

D Pod SR Pod MPod A SR Ch UK MSc Podiatry (Glasgow)  
Podiatrist

### What are the important elements in choosing children's footwear?

Children's feet grow in spurts, and they require new shoes every three to four months. Most early toddlers (under 16 months of age) grow more than one-half a foot size in two months. Toddlers from age 16 to 24 months grow an average of one-half a foot size every three months. The young child, 24 to 36 months old, grows approximately one-half a foot size every four months, and children over 3 years of age experience increases of one-half a foot size every four to six months. Thus the importance of choosing the right shoe for your child and once you've found the right shoe for your child, you need to find the right fit.

Because kids have feet that are slightly different in size, the larger foot should determine the shoe size. It is recommended to measure the foot while your child is standing and allowing about a half-inch of growth room at the end of the shoe. You should allow one thumb width from the end of their toe to the end of the shoe. Always use the store's measuring stick to obtain the length and width of the child's foot as a starting point to finding the right fit. The number may be irrelevant if the shoe company has sized them slightly off, but it is a good starting point. Look for shoes with rounded toe boxes to give the toes more room for movement.

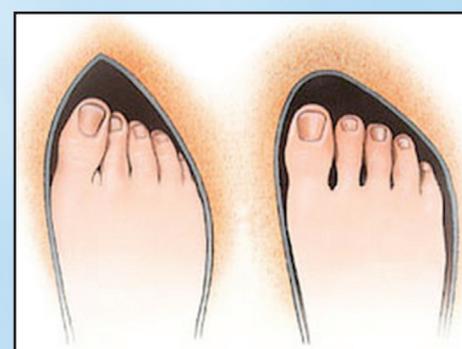
Matching the right shoe for the child's activity is also important in protecting growing feet. It is recommended that children wear running shoes during their leisure or sport activities. There

are many lightweight, breathable and washable options, with proper heel cushioning, mid foot support, flexibility, good traction and rounded edges to decrease stumbles and falls. Pay attention to the shoe's proper length, width and depth when fitting your child's shoe.

Poorly fitting children's shoes can cause toe problems, ingrown toenails, hammer toes, calluses and bunions. Remember, shoes should be comfortable from the start. If new shoes need to be "broken in," it means either they were not properly designed or not properly fitted for your child's foot.

### When should a child start wearing shoes?

It's a really common question but even evidence based literature can give you diverse suggestions. Some literature suggests looking for rigid soles while other literature argues that kids should go barefoot. In my opinion (based on the most relevant evidence based literature), I follow and monitor the child frequently and also let nature do its work. 9 out of 10 children pronate from their early steps to the age of 8 years. Asymptomatic pronated feet are very common and they are part of the growth development. Shoes should be worn as soon as the child starts walking outdoors. Thus, there is no need to put more pressure on our children. If the child is comfortable going barefoot indoors and the child is not in pain let them be. But, it is also important to wear good and supportive footwear when attending



school and during leisure activities to protect their feet and perform better. The old thinking idea that rigid high-tops help keep a child's foot in position and offered stability, is challenged by literature today that tends to agree that less is more when it comes to shoes in the first few years of life.

During their first steps, you want them either barefoot or in the most flexible shoe possible so their muscles can develop properly. Flexibility is the most imperative concern as they are developing their arch.

### What are the warning signs that a parent or healthcare practitioner should look out for that would necessitate referral to you?

Pain and discomfort are the signs that a child is having foot problems. It is also recommended that a yearly check up is of utmost importance.

Further help and advice can be obtained from the Podopaediatric clinic at Birkirkara health centre which is open by appointment between Mondays and Saturdays. Appointment may be made via telephone on:

21494961/2/3





## New Year's Resolution - Staying Away from Fad Diets

Dr. Mario Caruana BSc., MSc., PhD

Registered Dietitian - Nutritionist

[www.mariocaruana.com](http://www.mariocaruana.com)

With all the focus on weight in our society, it is not surprising that many people choose fad diets. A fad diet is a diet where you eat a very restrictive diet (also called 'very low calorie diet') with few foods or an unusual combination of foods for a short period of time. Fad diets are targeted to people who want to lose weight quickly. They are the perfect advertisement for New Year's resolution, where people vow to improve their eating habits and get in shape. Fad-diets can be tempting as they offer a quick-fix to a long-term problem.



### Rapid Weight Loss

Conflicting claims, testimonials and hype by so-called "experts" can confuse even the most informed consumers. Slow, steady weight loss is more likely to last than dramatic weight changes. Healthy plans aim for a loss of no more than 0.5-1 kilogram of body weight per week. If you lose weight quickly there is a tendency that muscle, bone and water will be lost; these are the body parts we do not want to lose! Limiting food choices or following rigid meal plans can be an overwhelming, unpleasant task. With any recommended diet, always ask yourself: 'Can I eat this way for the rest of my life?' If the answer is no, the plan is not for you.

### Quantities and Limitations

Examples of common fad diets are shown in Table 1. One common feature of such diets is that they allow unlimited quantities of specific food (such as cabbage soup diet), leading to a boring and hard-to-stick monotonous meal plan. It is important to avoid any diet that eliminates or severely restricts entire food groups, such as carbohydrates. Some critical nutrients (such as iron and calcium) will be missed and is detrimental to health, especially if a medical condition is present. In addition, dietary advice based on scientific evidence is important. For instance, there is no evidence that combining certain foods or eating foods at specific times of day will help with weight loss. Neither is there evidence that eating the 'wrong food' produces toxins such as in the detoxification (detox) diet!

**Table 1: Examples of Fad Diets**

DIET TYPE	SOME EXAMPLES
Controlled Carbohydrates	Dr. Atkins New Diet Revolution Paleo diet Zone diet Grapefruit diet Sugar busters
Food Combining	Hay diet Dukan diet Fit for Life
Liquid Diets	Cambridge diet Cabbage soup diet Detox diet (e.g. Master Cleanse or juice fasting) KE (feeding tube) diet
Others	The Blood Type diet Sinful diet Macrobiotics 5:2 diet Alkaline diet

The bottom line is simple: if a diet sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Ultimately, the best way to lose weight is to change the habits that are causing the extra weight. If you want to maintain a healthy weight, build muscle and lose fat, the best path is a lifelong combination of eating smarter with appropriately sized portions and be physically active. This needs commitment from the individual and professional advice.



## The CARE Project Ms Marika Podda Connor Charge Nurse, Migrant Health Liaison Office

In the autumn of 2015, due to the sudden influx of migrants hailing mainly from Syria to EU countries, the European Commission issued a call for proposals for projects to “Support Member States under particular migratory pressure in their response to health related challenges” in the framework of the Work Plan for 2015 of the Health Programme. The Ministry of Health together with other four EU countries assisted in the submission of the proposal which emerged with a set of eight work pages as the framework of the CARE Project: Common Approach for Refugees and other Migrants’ Health. The Primary Health Care Department, through the Migrant Health Liaison Office was appointed to lead the project for Malta which will be coming to an end in March 2017. The country partners involved in the project are: Croatia, Italy, Greece and Slovenia.

One of the work packages involved the delivery of training to health professionals and stakeholders working with migrants. The CARE Project staff members agreed to invite two guest speakers from the country partners to participate in the delivery of the Training Seminar: Migration and Health to share their experience and their work with migrants in their home country. Professor Eleni Hatzidimitriadou, *professor* of community psychology and public mental health from Christ Church University in Kent, UK and Dr. Elissavet Ioannidi, sociologist and senior researcher from the School of Public Health in Athens, Greece focused on the topics of: Mental Health Issues of Migrants, Caring for Vulnerable Migrants, Cultural Diversity and Cultural Mediation. Ms. Marika Podda Connor, Charge Nurse at the Migrant Health Liaison Office participated in the training seminar by giving a presentation on the



Identification, Protection and Support for Victims of Human Trafficking. The training seminars were held between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of October and over a hundred participants attended the sessions. The training seminar served as a platform for knowledge sharing on the dynamics brought about by migration and also for future collaboration with stakeholders working with migrants.

## Recipes by Yvonne Azzopardi Christmas Chocolate Bark



### Ingredients

- 1 cup cocoa powder
- 1 cup coconut oil (unrefined)
- 2 tablespoons pure honey
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup roasted pistachio nuts without shell
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### Method

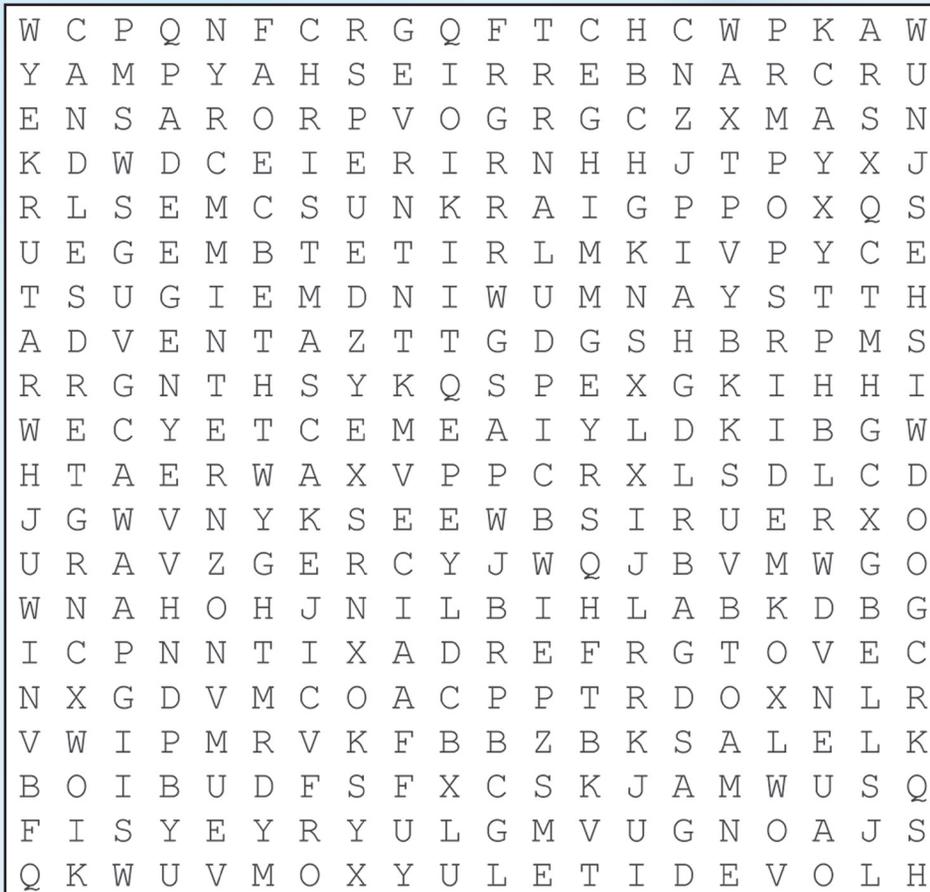
- Place the pistachio nuts in a plastic bag which can be sealed. With the use of a wooden spoon or a mallet, pound the pistachios till they are chopped into small pieces.
- In a medium bowl mix the cocoa powder, coconut oil, honey and vanilla together. Mix well until they form a smooth consistency.
- Put the pistachios and the dried cranberries into the mixture and stir well.
- Line a 9x13inch pan with parchment paper and pour the mixture into the pan. Spread the mixture evenly with the use of a spatula.
- Put the pan in the freezer for 1 hour and then break the chocolate into pieces.
- Storage: Freezer or refrigerator.

One can choose to give this as a christmas gift by putting it in either a decorative tin or a glass jar and decorate with a nice ribbon.





## WORDSEARCH - FESTIVITIES!



ADVENT

BAKING

BELLS

CANDLES

CARDS

CHARITY

CHRISTMASCAKE

CRANBERRIES

GOODWISHES

LOG

LOVE

MINCEPIES

MULLEDWINE

PRESENTS

RIBBON

TRAVEL

TURKEY

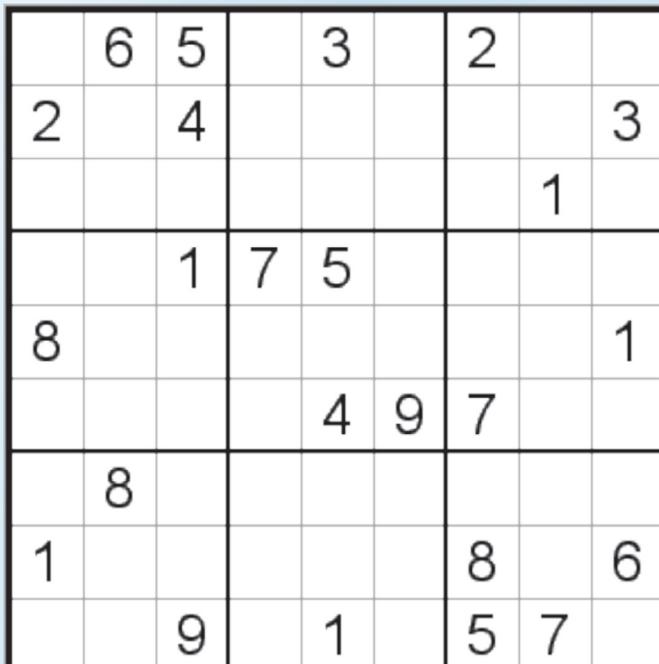
WRAPPINGPAPER

WREATH

YULETIDE

## SUDOKU

Level: Hard



## Joke of the Day

A shop manager overheard one of his cashiers tell a customer, "We haven't had it for a while, and I doubt we'll be getting it soon," The manager quickly assured the customer that the shop would have whatever it was she wanted by next week. After the customer left, the manager read the cashier the shop rules:

"Never tell the customer that we're out of anything. Tell them we'll have it next week." After a pause, the manager asked the cashier, "Now, what did the customer want?"

The cashier answered: 'Rain!'

*Readers Digest*

## Famous Quote:

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

Albert Einstein

Contact the editorial team on 25576183 / 25576186 or on e-mail address below:

- Rebecca Cachia Feame (rebecca.cachia-feame@gov.mt)
- Mariella Bombagi (mariella.bombagi@gov.mt)
- Sonia Azzopardi Axiak (sonia.azzopardi-axiak@gov.mt)
- Yvonne Azzopardi (yvonne.a.azzopardi@gov.mt)
- Dorothy Scicluna (dorothy.scicluna@gov.mt)



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