



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **GHA and GHITA work together to raise awareness of hearing impairments**

The Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) and the Gibraltar Hearing Impaired and Tinnitus Association (GHITA), are working in close collaboration to enhance and further develop audiology services.

GHITA, a non-profit association, advocating for the needs of the hearing impaired, state that hearing loss may affect as many as 5,000 Gibraltarians. As a result, the GHA is currently undertaking an initiative to register persons affected with hearing loss or impairment who wish to do so. In September this year, the Primary Care nursing staff and GHITA volunteers will set up an information desk at the Primary Care Centre reception area and St Bernard's Hospital's main entrance. Questionnaires will be distributed to members of the public in order to gather valuable data to assist medical professionals in identifying areas within the service, which may be improved and further developed.

Based on statistics in the United Kingdom, 41% of over 50 year olds and 71% of those over 70, find it difficult to hear people speak, yet, 40% of people are not aware of the fact, or feel embarrassed in seeking advice. It is also estimated that 1 in 10 people suffer from Tinnitus, a ringing, buzzing or other intrusive sound, which can make it hard to hear or concentrate. The term 'hearing loss', is used to describe those who are deaf, hard of hearing, or suffer from conditions such as Tinnitus, Meniere's disease or Hyperacusis.

- Meniere's disease causes dizzy spells, sickness and a sudden drop in hearing and in many occasions it can be misdiagnosed.
- Hyperacusis makes some sounds, frequencies or volumes painful to hear and can cause temporary hearing loss.



To help raise GHITA's profile, and reduce the stigma surrounding hearing impairment, a deaf awareness seminar was organised and delivered by Mr Edgar Triay, GHITA's Chairperson at the Primary Care Centre. A total of 29 health care professionals attended the sessions, receiving their certificates of completion this week. Clinical Nurse Manager for the Primary Care Centre, Ms Suzanne Romero said: "We are delighted to work together with GHITA to help raise awareness and understanding amongst frontline health care professionals and the general public on hearing impairments."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa added: "I would like to personally thank Mr Triay, the GHITA volunteers, Suzanne and her excellent staff at the Primary Care for their hard work and diligence in leading this important initiative. On having met with GHITA on several occasions, I really do admire their drive and determination in advocating for persons affected by hearing impairments and their eagerness to work together with us at the GHA to help develop these important services."