

## **Coeliac Awareness Day 2017 Speech**

**Professor Carolina Ciacci,**

**Dr Pierre Ellul,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Dear friends.**

**I am pleased to welcome you all to this  
commemoration of National Coeliac Awareness Day.**

**This event has been made possible thanks to the collaboration between Narrative Structures and the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.**

**This is the third year that we are presenting important information about coeliac disease, and its impact.**

**Let me begin by extending my thanks to Professor Ciacci, who joins us from the University of Salerno to share her expertise, about the links between coeliac disease and a person's quality of life.**

**I am informed that the focus of this year's lecture shall be on the psychological dimension of living with coeliac disease, and the way it can affect an individual's mental, emotional, and relational wellbeing.**

**It is important to remember the inter-relation between physiological and psychological wellbeing.**

**Unless we take care, to sustain our mental health, we will not be acting holistically, to ensure the full health of all individuals within our society.**

**I am pleased to note that, events such as this public lecture are continuing to promote discussions, among medical professionals and service providers, while also educating the community of individuals who have been diagnosed with the condition.**

**I am also pleased to note that, in this way, we are providing necessary information to the general public, which is being shared on a nation-wide platform.**

**I am informed that there are over 1,500 people in Malta and Gozo who are registered as living with this condition. However, there might be individuals living with coeliac disease who have remained undiagnosed.**

**I have met individuals who have been living with coeliac disease all their lives and have been diagnosed in their adulthood.**

**We must ensure that the symptoms of coeliac disease do not go ignored, or are mistaken for some other condition.**

**For this reason, I would like to encourage our authorities to introduce the necessary screening, to identify such a condition as a preventive measure.**

**We are informed that, left untreated or undiagnosed, coeliac disease can lead to more severe complications, which include osteoporosis, certain kinds of cancer, and other long-term complications.**

**Therefore, we must ensure that timely diagnosis and treatment become a reality for all people living with coeliac disease.**



**We know for sure that, if Coeliac disease diagnosed and treated efficiently, it is controllable, and a high quality of life can be maintained.**

**For this reason, we must continue to promote education about gluten-free options and diets.**

**I would also like to encourage the food service sector, the hospitality industry, and tourism authorities, to further educate their employees and provide for a wider selection of gluten-free food products.**

**Let me also note, with satisfaction, that the President's Kitchen Garden and the San Anton Palace staff have attended an information training sessions about gluten-free food serving, and preparation.**

**This training was carried out last year, thanks to an initiative between Narrative Structures and Coeliac UK, through the support of the Coeliac Association of Malta.**

**These are the kinds of practical and hands-on approaches we need to see taking root, in the private sector, across our islands.**

**Let us also do more, by working together, to promote synergies between businesses, civil society, and our national authorities, to highlight awareness, and to spearhead information campaigns.**

**Media visibility and yearly commemorations, such as the one we observe today, have an important role to play, to spread a message of solidarity and hope for people living with this condition.**

**Let this National Day for Coeliac Awareness give us the confidence to do more, and to encourage further initiatives.**

**Let us work together, united, as different stakeholders around one shared mission, for increased education and access to sustainable care.**

**Let us work together to encourage people to take their symptoms seriously, and support individuals who are managing their condition.**

**Let us work together to ensure that the mental and physical health and the holistic wellbeing of each and every member of society in our Maltese Islands, is a reality for all.**

**Thank you.**