

"New era" in private health care

St James Hospital buys out Capua Hospital

Herman Grech

St James Hospital has become Malta's largest private health entity after months-long negotiations led to its takeover of Capua Hospital.

The hospital, in the heart of Sliema, will be called St James (Capua) Hospital and will operate as a separate entity to the 13-bed St James Hospital in Zabbar.

The contract was signed between AX Holdings chairman Angelo Xuereb, owner of Capua Hospital, and St James Hospital managing director Josie Muscat.

The deal includes the hospital property, all equipment within the hospital and the 80 or so employees on Capua's books. The value of the deal has not been disclosed.

Capua Palace Hospital, which has a capacity of 80 beds and five operating theatres, was completed in 1996 at a cost of Lm7.5 million.

When contacted, Dr Muscat was clearly relieved after long months of on-and-off negotiations.

"We have started a new era. We know we now have a big responsibility to make the project a viable one," he said.

Dr Muscat expressed confidence that, with the help of all employees as well as of the medical profession, the level of private health care in both hospitals would be of the same high standards which the public increasingly expects.

"We intend to bring about change. We understand the employees might be a bit apprehensive at first, but if we work together I'm sure it will be a happy relationship."

Dr Muscat said it was high time



All smiles... St James Hospital managing director Josie Muscat and AX Holdings chairman Angelo Xuereb after signing the agreement.

for the private and public health sectors to work closer together, rather than compete with each other.

"With new systems and facilities this should be made even more possible," he said.

Dr Muscat said it was too early to say whether there would be any changes in charges, adding that the management would continue assessing the situation to ensure no losses were suffered.

Dr Muscat said it was a top priority for St James to retain its reputation as a family hospital,

even though it was extending its services to larger premises.

He said it was still uncertain whether St James Hospital would forge ahead with plans to open another hospital in Tarxien after sealing the Sliema hospital deal.

Apart from the Zabbar hospital, St James also operates several offshoot clinics that operate in various specialised fields, ranging from cosmetic dermatology to vision disorder treatment.

Mr Xuereb thanked the management and staff of Capua Hospital for their dedication

and service over the past six years.

He expressed satisfaction that with the support of all the staff, Capua Hospital managed to promote a higher level of private health care in Malta.

Mr Xuereb said he believed that the new management would maintain the qualitative levels of private health care and further develop the hospital's potential.

There is one other major private hospital in Malta - St Philip's Hospital.