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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS - ΤΟΜΟΣ ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΕΩΝ



*The Abduction of Europe
Bowl, Attica, 370 B.C.*

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in which the research will develop before its application.

Since 1967, a group of Nephrologists, composed of a full professor, an associate professor and researcher, working at the University of Messina, on the basis of the basic principles of research have developed a program of research, which with time gave excellent results.

Today the above group, working in three scientific fields (carnitine and uremia, sexual dysfunction in patients with chronic renal failure, phosphorus and kidney disease) have produced a total of around 5000 citations and an impact factor total of approximately 600.

The main factors of scientific success in the group were cohesion, commitment consistency, reliability of the members, the originality of the investigations and love for the patients.

FROM CLINICAL DATA TO MOLECULAR BIOLOGY A CONTINUOUS CREATIVE PATH

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A question frequently raised is whether or not the Emeritus Professor has any role to play as researcher, clinician or educator. Herein, I will describe a research paradigm from the period of Emeritus Professorship which might possibly respond to the question posed. In 30 patients with short stature, caused by pituitary stalk interruption syndrome (PSIS) or pituitary hypoplasia (PH), nosologic entities of unknown etiology, the underlying molecular defect was searched for. Searching for molecular defects in a disorder is a journey into the chaos of the genome, if the frame of genes to be examined is not narrowed by unique clinical features, as emerged in our cohort. Specifically, 3 out of the 30 patients, also had single central incisor, a rare midline defect encountered in holoprocencephaly. Moreover, 1 of these 3 cases also presented loss of the short arm of chromosome 18, a locus harboring the TGIF gene, a holoprocencephaly-related gene. These observations prompted the search in holoprocencephaly-related gene mutations (TGIF, SHH, SIX3) in our patients.

DNA analysis disclosed mutations in TGIF and SHH genes and the hypothesis was formulated that PSIS or PH belong to the wide spectrum of holoprocencephaly phenotypes. It is very important to uncover the molecular defect in a genetically determined disorder for various reasons but mainly for genetic counseling. The data derived were published in the JCEM (IF: 5.5, Tatsi C, Sertedaki A, Voutetakis A, Valavani E, Magiakou MA, Kanakagantenbein C, Chrousos GP, Dacou-Voutetakis C). Subsequent literature reports confirmed our findings. The paradigm described enforces the view that after "graduating" the Emeritus Professor can still answer scientific questions and help young scientists in their initial steps.

POSTPRANDIAL DYSMETABOLISM-A REAL HEALTH THREAT-SOME OLDER AND NEWER DATA FROM ONGOING WORK OF OUR GROUP

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Postprandial dysmetabolism is characterized by excessive rise in postprandial glucose and triglyceride levels in serum, and is an independent risk factor for development of cardiovascular disease, even in non-diabetic subjects. Main data concerning earlier and newer data of our group can be summarized as follows:

- There is not always any relation between fasting and postprandial triglyceride (TG) values. Thus postprandial levels can be relatively low in spite of moderately high fasting levels and vice versa
- Subjects with microalbuminuria present with higher postprandial TG levels compared with normal persons.
- Arterial endothelial function -as estimated by the flow mediated dilatation method- is affected after eating a rich in saturated fat meal, but not after ingestion of a meal rich in monounsaturated fat.
- The addition of vinegar to a test meal results in a decrease in glycaemia in diabetic persons. This happens only after ingestion of a high glycaemic index meal and not after consumption of an isocaloric and isoglucidic meal.
- There is, especially in diabetic persons, a relative activation of some coagulation factors after meal ingestion, which is clearly diminished after oral glibenclamide administration.
- Mice fed with a diet rich in saturated fat show over a period of six months an increase in serum LDL cholesterol, but a decrease when fed with monounsaturated fat. Interestingly mice fed with a comparable diet rich in both saturated and monounsaturated fat show also an impressive serum LDL cholesterol reduction.

The above data further emphasize the importance of postprandial metabolic changes as potential atherogenic factors.

INCREASING LIFE EXPECTANCY AND PUBLIC HEALTH: THE NEED TO RECONSIDER DEMOGRAPHIC, BIOLOGICAL, FUNCTIONAL AND RETIREMENT AGE

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Life expectancy (at birth) is an indicator for the health status of a population and it is increasing worldwide, with many social, economical, and epidemiological consequences.

The reasons for this development are quite well understood

as a combination of medical and other influential factors like industrial productivity and political stability.

It is now time to reconsider definitions of age and ageing acknowledging the fact that only demographic age is a constant factor, but the individual and societal perception very often does not match with the changing age structure of e.g. European societies. The biological age does not necessarily reflect the demographic one, showing great individual variations based on genetic and life style factors, as well as biochemical markers.

The functional age is another parameter based on abilities, preferences and professional background of the single person. One of the political hypotheses is the following: there is no scientific evidence, neither medical, or psychological, or social, for fixed retirement ages as still in use in many countries.

Therefore a new and flexible approach is proposed based on the complex age status of an individual.

Increasing life expectancy offers many opportunities for individuals and societies; these have to be highlighted and medium term also integrated into political actions.

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH AFTER RETIREMENT: A HURDLE RACE

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In Europe the age of retirement from either academic or non academic positions (roughly ranging between 65 to 70, depending on countries and institutions) coincides with a period of life where many senior investigators (PIs) have become optimally qualified to operate as group leaders and to conceive ingenious original research strategies. Not to spoil such a human capital – given the burdens and limits placed by laws and rules in force nearly in all European Countries – a number of favourable conditions need to be simultaneously fulfilled. Notably: 1. The availability of funding agencies still willing to support “ghost” investigators, devoid of academic position and formal connections with research institutes; 2. An institution ready to host retired researchers, providing them with space and basal facilities; since universities are not allowed to commit budget administration to retired personnel, it is also mandatory to find; 3. An external non-academic institution taking care of this; 4. Last but most important, a retired PI active in the field of experimental sciences must count on a team of young investigators still trusting in his/her intellectual guidance and ready to work under his/her supervision, without expecting any support to their academic career, except that coming from publishing good papers. Needless to mention that external

collaborations will represent an added value to consolidate the research activity of a retired PI.

In my presentation I will exemplify the general situation outlined above by recollecting my personal experience as a “retired PI”.

SCIENCE DOES NOT STOP WHEN YOU STEP DOWN: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CORD BLOOD BANK AT THE BRFAA

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In recent years, cord blood (CB) has become a standard alternative source of Hematopoietic Stem Cells (HSC) to bone marrow or peripheral blood for allogeneic HSC transplantation mainly in patients who lack an HLA-matched donor, for the treatment of a number of malignant and non-malignant diseases.

The aim of a CBB is Cord Blood collection, the strict selection of the “BEST” CB Units and Processing (Isolation of Hematopoietic stem cells), the HLA Typing of selected units and Infectious Disease Testing, the Cryo-storage of processed selected CB Units and the Immediate release of CB for transplantation.

In 2003 the Hellenic Cord Blood Bank (HCBB) was founded in Biomedical Research Foundation, Academy of Athens (BRFAA). Its aim was:

To collect, process and store up to 20,000 unrelated cord blood donations for children or adults and selectively cryopreserve cord blood units with:

1. HLA haplotypes frequent in Greeks
2. HLA rare haplotypes in Greeks
3. HLA haplotypes from minorities and mix marriages

The HCBB has GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) facilities at the HCBB processing laboratory and has established an EFI accredited Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics laboratory which is currently using the most advanced technology available (Next Generation Sequencing). The HCBB has been accredited by the international organization of cellular therapies FACT-NetCord (Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapies), for the unrelated allogeneic transplantation since 2013.

Until now HCBB has released 20 cord blood units for transplantation in Greece and abroad for both children and adults and 3800 cord blood units are being stored for future clinical use.

More recently, the HCBB is expanding its horizons by developing a Regenerative Medicine and Tissue Engineering Unit, according to the newest trends in advanced therapies.

The HCBB has also been involved with associations and organizations that promote the idea of volunteerism and public benefit.