



The hospital pharmacy practice in Greece: the reality

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According to the proposals made by EAHP members a couple of years ago for the definition of Hospital Pharmacy (HP): "Hospital Pharmacy is the healthcare service which comprises the art, practice, or profession of preparing, preserving, compounding, and dispensing medical drugs, a service provided by pharmacy professionals to patients and healthcare professionals in hospitals." And further on: "Hospital Pharmacy is a profession that strives to continuously maintain and improve the medication management and pharmaceutical care of patients to the highest standards in a hospital setting."

Reality is far away in Greek hospitals.

The HP practice in our country was described by law in 1993 and since then, there has been no further improvement. All hospital pharmacies are organised and function in the same poor conditions regarding framework and managerial tools. These are the parts of hospitals with insufficient space, means, personnel, development and scientific recognition.

Medicines are delivered on a daily basis in most of the hospitals and are supported by computer systems. In order to support the

all-day hospital functions pharmacists are obliged to work overtime every day.

Most of the hospital pharmacies are supporting the storage and distribution of other medicinal products such as devices, orthopaedics, and reagents. All hospital pharmacies are giving medicines to the community for special treatments such as chemotherapy and also to poor people not covered by social security. Laboratories of pharmacokinetics or parenteral dilution exist in a few hospitals and they are supported by the same number of pharmacists.

In Greece today there are 132 general and special hospitals established and in pharmaceutical services there are less than 300 working pharmacists. The number has remained the same for the last 10 years. Although the global average is 10% hospital pharmacists of the total pharmacists' number, in Greece the percentage is only 3%. That means two or three pharmacists at each hospital and if we analyse the real condition we find 60 hospitals with only one pharmacist and only ten hospitals with four to seven pharmacists.

At the same time, the consumption of medicines in hospitals rose from Euros 318 million in 1997 to Euros 1,514 million in 2007. This is the result of non-existing

negotiation systems of prices or strict hospital formulary forms in Greek hospitals. The common joke in the market is that Greek hospitals are the pharmaceutical companies' paradise.

The salaries of the hospital pharmacists are the lowest in the scientific hospital community and they are about 60% of the doctors' salaries at each grade.

Postgraduate titles and specialties, as well as continuing educational programmes, are not obliged by law but, fortunately, they exist due to the efforts of individual pharmacists and the Panellenic Association of Hospital Pharmacists.

In this specific environment the Greek hospital pharmacists are called to serve the patient, the science of HP, the hospital organisation, and the public funds. This is an impossible mission.

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