

Volume 2 - Issue 1, Spring 2008 - Cardiology Leaders

Interview with Prof. Stefanadis



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Please Tell Us About Your Background in the Field of Cardiology.

I graduated from the University of Athens Medical School in 1971 and during my undergraduate studies, I had the chance to attend subspecialty rotations, during which I was captivated by exciting advances in the field of cardiology. I was particularly inspired by the development of invasive cardiology. It was my belief that cardiology would give me the opportunity to develop as a clinician and as a researcher. Therefore, my choice to follow a career in the field of cardiovascular diseases came as a natural consequence. My post-graduate training was obtained in the department of cardiology of Athens University at Hippokraton hospital, under the directorship of Prof. Avgoustakis. I received my PhD in 1988 after which, I pursued a research fellowship in the department of cardiology at Ohio State University, US, on the elastic properties of the aorta.

What are Your Specific Areas of Interest Within This Field and How Has this Evolved?

My heart belongs to interventional cardiology. Our hospital, was the first hospital in Greece in which percutaneous angioplasties were performed. A novel era was beginning and I had the chance to be part of it. I focused on developing my skills and expanding my knowledge. Aside from my clinical work, I was involved in numerous research protocols and designed several catheters that were applied both in the experimental setting and in patients with cardiac disease. In 1983, I joined the permanent staff of the First Department of Cardiology in Athens Medical School and a few years later I was appointed chief of the coronary care unit and the cath lab. In 2002 I became professor of cardiology and in 2003 I was appointed Head of the First Department of Cardiology in Athens Medical School. In 2003 I was elected Vice-Dean and in 2007, Dean of the Athens Medical School.

Please Tell Us a Little About Your Current Professional Position.

The First Department of Cardiology at the Athens Medical School has 40 beds in the various wards and 14 beds in the coronary care unit. It has an echocardiography laboratory, a non-invasive laboratory that offers exercise and pharmacologic stress testing, three catheterisation laboratories that offer a comprehensive approach to the treatment of coronary artery disease, structural heart disease, arrhythmias and congestive heart failure and a biochemistry lab. Furthermore, there is a cardiology outpatient clinic, a hypertension clinic, a lipid clinic, a heart failure clinic, an adult congenital heart and pulmonary hypertension clinic, as well as a peripheral vessels clinic.

What are the Main Management Challenges You Face in Your Working Life?

The greatest challenge is to keep up with the growing demands for optimal health provision in an era of steadily increasing financial pressure. Furthermore, these demands need to be met effectively and certainly not at the expense of research, which is a fundamental component of a university setting.

What is Your Advice for Improving Teamwork and Generating Good Staff Morale Within Your Team?

It is very important to acknowledge the work and expertise of every staff member. Every colleague's clinical and research programme should be encouraged. Furthermore, it is essential to distribute responsibilities fairly and to encourage initiative-taking and leadership.

How Does Your Department Ensure Medical Safety and What Guidelines do You Follow?

We practice clinical cardiology in compliance with national and European guidelines. In order to ensure medical safety, we keep full records of every patient admitted to our department or seen in an outpatient setting. All information is entered into our database and our statistics are periodically reviewed. Furthermore, we consistently perform morbidity and mortality rounds and discuss the most challenging cases. In addition, doctors, nurses and technicians are encouraged to participate in congresses and at meetings in order to expand their knowledge.

What Sorts of Modern Technology Does Your Department Use?

Each department has cutting-edge technology and equipment. The cath lab is equipped with the latest technology with a variety of diagnostic

devices available, such as intravascular ultrasound devices, OCT and thermography devices. Besides routine PCIs, a wide range of interventional procedures such as valvuloplasties and atrial septal defect closures are carried out using the latest medical technology such as intracardiac ultrasound. Certainly, with such devices our department has the possibility to tailor the management of each patient according to his or her needs.

Finally, What Three Key Rules are Essential to Other Cardiology Managers & Administrators?

The following should be considered essential:

- (a) Compliance with established guidelines;
- (b) Monitoring and discussion of adverse events, and
- (c) Encouragement of research in compliance with national and international standards.

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