



Andreas Petrolekas
NCO Greece (Athens)
agpetrol@otenet.gr

European Tour of Residencies: Urology Training in Greece

Dear residents,

I should like to provide some concise information concerning the current situation in Greece for urological residents.

We currently have 182 residents and 780 urologists. A urological residency takes a total of five years, consisting of one year of practice in general surgery, three years of practice in a urological department and two semesters of clinical practice in two of the following fields: gynaecology, plastic surgery and pediatric urology.

In Greece residents usually finish their residency in the department they started their training. There are 94 urology departments in Greece, 33 of which are licenced to educate residents, and 19 of these 33 departments can be found in the city of Athens, 4 in Thessaloniki and remainder in other cities. Nine urology departments are university based; two are to be found in Athens, two in Thessaloniki and one each in Ioannina, Larisa, Patra, Iraklio Crete and Alexandroupoli.

In order to become a urology resident, you have to enrol on a list once you start your one year residency in general surgery. There is a waiting list for every hospital in Greece and the waiting time varies from two to five years. This waiting list - which exists for every medical specialty with in some cases an exhausting waiting time of (for some specialties like dermatology or gynaecology) 5-9 years - is a big problem for residents in Greece. There is a waiting list for the one year of general surgical training as well, but not for the six months of gynaecological, pediatric urology and plastic surgery training.

After finishing the five years of urological residency one has to participate in the final exams, which under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, take place in seven cities which have medical schools. The committee in charge of the exams consists of a professor in urology and two directors of urological departments of National Health System (N.H.S) hospitals. The exams include two written exams, one in a urological department of the National Health System and the second one in a university department and two oral exams, one in a N.H.S urology department and the final one in front of the committee.

Regarding the education of residents, every urology department has an education programme for which the staff, in collaboration with the residents (and under the supervision of the director) is responsible (the number, the frequency and the contents of the lectures). Once a month the Hellenic Urological Association (H.U.A) organizes lectures and literature sessions in Athens, updating participants on the latest developments. The H.U.A. also organizes a compulsory final exam for the residents at the end of the year and the resident who has the highest score can win a scholarship of 3,000 Euros. In addition, each section of the H.U.A (f.i. Uro-oncology, Neuro-urology, Andrology, Endourology etc) as well as various departments, which may be university or non-university departments, organizes symposia and seminars in various Greek cities in which residents can participate. In 2005 the H.U.A will organize a four day intensive education program along the same lines as the E.U.R.E.P. programme for residents in their final two years of training. Finally, the H.U.A grant scholarships of 6,000 Euros to residents and young urologists, to train abroad, as well as provide H.U.A grant scholarships of 3,000 Euros each, to the Greek resident who gets the highest grades in the EBU "In service" exam and in the written "FEBU" exam. Scholarships for young urologists to train abroad for a period of time may also be obtained through the government and various foundations.

With regard to clinical and surgical practice, residents in Greece do not have a fixed curriculum; training will depend on the priorities set by the director and staff members of a department. In Greece, there is a great variety between surgical procedures carried out by the various departments as well as dealing with emergencies since some hospitals do not have an emergency department. According to a recent survey which took place in Athens, residents rate their experience in minor surgery as fair to good, poor for major surgery and fair to good for endo-urological procedures.

Clinical or basic research is compulsory for residents in Greece. Some residents do a Ph.D. during their residency and some do it during their waiting time. Generally, most of the research is carried out by urological departments of universities, where there is collaboration with laboratories and pathologic depart-

ments. A resident aiming to do research has to apply to one of these departments. A typical day of a resident starts at 6.30 - 7.30 a.m. and finishes at 15.00 -16.00 p.m. We are "on call" 4-12 days each month also depending on the number of residents of a department. The salary of a resident is approximately 1,000 Euros per month and for every "on call service" 60-100 Euros is being paid. The mean basic salary of a person with higher education in the private sector is between 800 and 1,000 Euros while a senior urologist (working in the N.H.S.) earns about 1,500 euros monthly, not including the "on call" services.

Most of the departments do general urology. Radical operations, especially cystectomies and endo-urology of the upper tract, are done by a limited number of urological departments and a few departments also perform laparoscopic surgery. There are specialized outpatient departments (andrological urology, lithiasis, prostate, neuro-urodynamics etc) but mostly in universities. The 2nd Urologic Department of the Athens Medical School is accredited by the FEBU. Residents from other countries who would like to apply for clinical training or research in Greece are kindly requested to address the national committee of residents for more information.

In Greece all residents are members of the H.U.A, as there is no independent organization for residents. There are three national repre-

Section Editor
Dr. Stéphane Larré,
Paris (F)



sentatives of residents and one delegate in the education committee of the H.U.A, all four elected at the national urological congress that take place every couple of years. Communication between residents is mainly done by mail but we are trying to organize an e-mail database to improve communication in the future and we intend to ask for a 'Resident Corner' in the official journal of the H.U.A which is published quarterly.

We are looking forward to exchanging ideas concerning education and training through the "Residents Corner" in European Urology Today and believe that this new column will improve communication between residents all around Europe. We wish Dr Stephan Larré all the very best as the new section editor.

Many greetings from Greece.

PS: Special thanks to Athanasios Papatsoiris and Theodor Kalogeropoulos, Greek NCOs for their contribution in writing this text.



Cities with Medical Schools are: Athens (2 urologic departments within medical school), Thessaloniki (2 urologic departments), Larissa (1 department), Ioannina (1 department),

Patra (1 department), Irakleion (1 department), Alexandroupolis (1 department).

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