

EASL Recognition Award 2023 – Professor George Papatheodoridis

It is a great pleasure and a privilege to present Professor George Papatheodoridis with the EASL Recognition Award 2023. Professor Papatheodoridis is Professor of Medicine and Gastroenterology at the Medical School of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Director of the Academic Gastroenterology Department and Liver Transplantation Unit of “Laiko” General Hospital of Athens, Greece.

George was born and raised in the seaside town of Kalamata and subsequently moved to Athens for his medical degree and specialisation. He showed his academic credentials very early, excelling both in High School (19.9/20) and in the University (9.2/10). He completed his PhD on acute hepatitis superimposed on chronic HBsAg carriage with the collaboration of Dr Nickolaos Tassopoulos and under the supervision of Professor Angelos Hatzakis. After completing his specialty training in Gastroenterology at “Tzaneio” Hospital of Piraeus under the supervision of Dr Dimitrios Karamanolis, he moved to London for his postgraduate research with Professor Andy Burroughs, thus continuing a long tradition of Greek fellows training at the Royal Free Hospital. He spent two years at the Royal Free, where he produced seminal research on the role of infection in haemostasis in cirrhosis and the course of recurrent HCV infection post liver transplantation and in total >10 papers published

in high quality journals. He speaks very fondly of these years and is very appreciative of the influence of Andy in his development.

His return to Greece in 2000 marked the beginning of a meteoric rise in his career. He was appointed as a Lecturer and Consultant Gastroenterologist at the 2nd Academic Internal Medicine Department of “Hippokratio” General Hospital of Athens, where Professor Stephanos Hadziyiannis had established a referral centre for liver diseases. George focused his research in viral hepatitis, particularly hepatitis B, and gradually achieved international acclaim as a key opinion leader in the field. In 2010, he was appointed a member of the EASL Scientific Committee and Governing Board, and he was the first person in over 20 years and just the third person from Greece to achieve this. In 2013, he moved as the director of the newly established (first ever in the University of Athens) Academic Gastroenterology Department at “Laiko” General Hospital of Athens and became a full Professor of Medicine and Gastroenterology in 2015. In 2018, he actively participated in the establishment of a Liver Transplantation Unit in “Laiko” hospital, which was the second one in Greece, the first being in Thessaloniki. Since 2019, he is the Director of the Hellenic Transplant Organization, where he has been efficiently working for better organization of the organ and cell-tissue transplantation system and legislation in Greece having close collaborations with the Greek Ministry of Health and non-profit organizations like the Onassis Foundation. His experience, expertise

and strategic insight are widely recognized and respected. As a result of these, he currently serves as the Medical Director of “Laiko” Hospital and President of the Hellenic Foundation of Gastroenterology and Nutrition. He also served as president and general secretary of the Hellenic Association for the Study of Liver, general secretary of the Hellenic Society of Gastroenterology, chair of the National Greek Committee of Gastroenterology, treasurer of the Hepatitis B and C Public Policy Association and governing board member of the Greek Authority for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

In his career so far, he has published over 410 papers in PubMed indexed journals being first author in >95 and last/corresponding author in >90 papers. His papers have been published in several prestigious journals producing over 5,100 total impact factor, over 24,000/36,000 citations and an h-index of 79/88 (Scopus/Google Scholar). He was the co-ordinator of the 2012 EASL HBV CPG, which remains to date the most cited paper in Journal of Hepatology and a panelist in the 2017 EASL HBV and the 2023 EASL HDV CPGs. He is the co-ordinator of the PAGE-B international cohort, which produced 10 seminal papers, including the PAGE-B score for calculating the HCC risk in patients with chronic hepatitis B, remarkably without any financial support from any source. In addition, he has published several seminal papers on the natural history, outcomes, therapeutic indications and treatment of hepatitis B as well as in other liver

diseases. Importantly, he has been involved in and co-ordinated several public health projects and studies aiming at eliminating viral hepatitis in Greece and more broadly at an international level. He has given more than 185 lectures, chaired more than 60 lectures/round tables and presented more than 350 abstracts in international meetings. He is widely respected by his peers and has lasting friendly relationships with numerous colleagues in Greece and worldwide.

Even more importantly than his personal scientific achievements, he has enabled and facilitated research in his fields of interest in Greece. He has mentored and trained numerous young doctors and fellows and has been a continuous inspiration for trainees to become hepatologists. He has been PhD supervisor in over 50 aspiring hepatologists and gastroenterologists. He genuinely enjoys working with younger colleagues, sharing knowledge, ideas and methodology in clinical research. Most importantly, even today and despite his many administrative tasks, he always makes the time to produce or discuss new projects, go through data or perform data analysis himself and write or correct manuscript drafts. He is most generous with the rarest currency of all, which is his personal time and undivided attention. His relentless work ethic and his commitment to pass on his knowledge and expertise make this possible. In a relatively small country such as Greece, he has been a beacon for possibilities for his peers and young colleagues.

His impressive career was accomplished in Greece, where the research infrastructure and culture are limited compared to larger European countries. This makes his achievements even more remarkable.

He has been blessed with a very happy and supportive family, for which he is very proud of. His wife, Roula, is a paediatrician and his two daughters, Margarita and Alkistis, are both doctors, training in Gastroenterology and Oncology respectively. Unsurprisingly, they are all very successful in their respective fields. He recently became a grandfather and there is always a smile in his face when he speaks or shares photos of his grand-daughter Ellie.

In his rather limited free time, he enjoys spending time and travelling with his family. He is a loyal supporter of Olympiakos and always enjoys a good game of football or basketball.

All of us who had the privilege to train and be mentored by George, are extremely proud of his achievement and delighted that EASL has recognized and rewarded his immense contribution to Hepatology. This award is also a message for young colleagues that brilliance and hard work are rewarded, even if you come from a smaller country. Although the path can be trickier, the potential impact is also greater and it is certainly a very rewarding journey.