

**UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

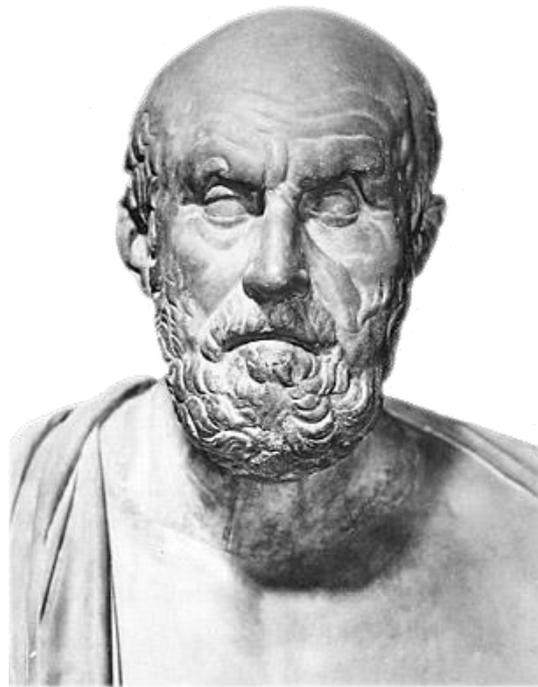
**“Meet the Hemostasis experts”
Scientific Workshop**

“Who killed Hippocrates?”

**"The High Technology and its negative impact
in the physician patient relationship"**

**Fotios Pavlatos, MD
(Invited Speaker)**

**May 19, 2017
Auditorium “Ioannis Drakopoulos”
University of Athens**



The Greek Physician Hippocrates (c460 – c377 BC)

**“The humane spirit is one of our great
Hippocratic heritages”
George K. Daikos
(Emeritus Professor of Medicine)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although the title of my speech “Who killed Hippocrates” might sound suspiciously like the title of yet another thrilling detective novel by the world-famous mystery writer Agatha Christie, featuring her beloved detective Hercule Poirot, the miniature investigation I venture to launch is, of course, not into the physical death of Hippocrates, the founder of Scientific Medicine and the Humanistic Element in its practice, but practice into his timeless and timely spirit which is a long-standing source of inspiration for all of us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Starting from the last quarter of the 20th century and up today, we have witnessed an ever-increasing accumulation of developments, which strongly indicate that the noble Hippocratic Art is undergoing worldwide a profound crisis in modern times. This deepening crisis is not only gravely jeopardizing the ethical identity of the medical profession, but may also prove disastrous for the whole of our society, which is the ultimate receiver of health services.

Among the factors which are responsible for this "transformation" of Medical Science, and which contribute in

making up – allow me to say – a "**Hippocratic Deficiency Syndrome**", significant position is held by the development of Bio-Medical Sciences, particularly in the field of **High Technology**, which really, in some cases, could be said that it is almost a real "miracle."

Undoubtedly, this development of Bio-Medical Sciences, particularly in the field – as I just said – of High Technology, had a negative effect on the Physician-patient relationship, resulting in a change of image, reliability and generally the Doctor's identity, both in his professional and social life.

Undoubtedly, the birth of Hippocrates in 460 B.C remains a landmark in the history of modern medicine. It was then that a new idea was born: With the birth of Hippocrates, “the father of modern medicine”, a new methodology began to be applied and a new philosophy was created, a philosophy that would persist until our days.

The revolutionary view was that **the patient must be treated as a human being in his entirety and the cure must be addressed not only to his body but also to his spirit.** Since that time, these principles have constituted the ideal framework of the relationship between doctor and patient.

Another determinant principle is the **Hippocratic Oath**, which also defines the ethical code of the physician's identity. The Declaration of Geneva, established in 1948 by the Universal Medical Association, was inspired by the **ethical principles of this Oath and includes a paragraph in which is written that the medical services has to be given to each and every patient totally**

irrespective of national, religious or racial identity, financial or social status, or political beliefs.

No doubt that the progress over the last 20 years, specifically in the scientific, technological and social fields, has deeply affected the human society, while this impact of high technology on the provision of medical services has been particularly impressive, so please allow me to say at this point the words of the French Biologist **Jean Rostand**,

**“Technology has made us gods
before we are worthy of being men”.**

Undoubtedly, **High Technology**, slowly but surely, displaces the human element in close contact with the patient and his family. Another factor which contributes to the decline of the traditional relationship between the Physician and the patient, is the real “invasion” in the field of health services there are scientists, who are not in fact physicians, but operators of sophisticated super-machines or consultants on issues related to the domination of these technological developments.

So it is not surprising that the physician’s figure is not any more at the centre of the field of medical services.

Yet another factor that has exerted a profound effect on the doctor-patient connect within the health system is specialization and ultra-specialization within the traditional branches of medicine, so that, from being a system where almost 80% of the personnel were physicians of primary health care, family or general doctors, today the major part of the medical profession – I would say almost 80% -

are specialized physicians in the large traditional branches of medicine.

The trusted family doctor of past decades is a disappearing phenomenon, and this is leading to the fragmentation of medical care and to ever more specialized doctors whose personal and emotional involvement in the patient's malady becomes less and less significant.

And as **Peter Ward** wrote in one of his articles few years ago, in the **Scientific American Journal**, referring to the coexistence of the Human High Technology:

Integration of machines and human brains produces a collective intelligence that may or may not retain the qualities we now recognize as human.

And the question is always here:

Quo vadis Homo futuris?

Also, Professor **Stewart Wolf**, Professor of Medicine in the Temple University (and author of the book "**Crisis in Medical Education, Research and the Occupation**"), writes:

In today's "**Techno-Medicine**" the physicians do not spend time with the patients, leaving out the essential emotional component. So, **high technology displaces the humanitarian point of close contact and the interpersonal relationship with the patient.** In this way, a **crisis is created in Medicine credibility**, at a time when progress in the fields of **Information Technology** of **Bio-Technology** and generally of **Medical Science**, enables us to do

much more than in the past to prevent and treat severe and morbid conditions. And the words of **Gruenberg** who wrote **“This is the failure of the success”**, raises a big question:

How can we best respond to the increasing demands and expectations of our patients, and in general to those of modern society, in an atmosphere of patients’ decreasing respect for physicians on the one hand and the enfeebled authority of the medical profession on the other?

The answer is clear: The cultivation of the humanitarian dimension, with emphasis on **human values and medical ethics**, as determined by the Hippocratic spirit, which means **subordination of "machine" to the Doctor and not the Doctor to be part of the "machine" and just a “supplier”** of the produced medical product, in other words **“health provider”**.

Undoubtedly, a special bond of trust and reliability in the face of the doctor in the interpersonal Physician-patient relationship, must be created. His personality should always be framed with humanitarian values, particularly with regard to the view of human nature, actions, activities and behaviors, as our philosopher Aristotle meant. **The doctor is not only the Scientist - Healer of soul and body, but must behave as a human among fellow human beings who are suffering.** No doubt about it that, the patients, even when their condition is serious, feel relief, some kind of improvement, through the pleasure of the raising interest expressed by their Physician.

As far the question of the treatment of “**Hippocratic Deficiency Syndrome**” is concerned, it continues to remain valid today and relates with the humanistic education, throughout the course of Medical Education, as well as the continuing education after Graduation.

Special emphasis must be placed on the quality and standards of Medical Education in the Medical Schools, with a primary goal being the orientation of medical education into a broad **humanistic and social substrate**.

The teaching of the history of medicine, the ethics of medicine, the literature and generally the teaching of the social and humanistic sciences in the Medical Faculties are vital to the present-day needs of Medical Education. **Our students – as I said before – must learn not only about the “mechanics” of the body, but also about the human spirit “inside” the body.**

At this point, allow me to say that it is regrettable to have to mention the occasional written article or oral statement sometimes disseminated by the media with a view to blemishing the medical profession’s ethical substrate. Fortunately, however, these cases are minimal and in no way can denigrate the whole Medical Family whose vast majority respects the Hippocratic Art, its Spirit and noble wisdom.

I should also emphasize that the International Medical Community constantly demonstrates truly admirable examples of medical ethics, sacrifices, altruism and unselfishness, so that the rare attempt by the Press to prove otherwise is far from characterizing the real heights achieved by the typical physician in his daily practice. It

is more than certain, that the physicians around the world continue to struggle regardless of their frequent exhausting medical duties, the “endless” hours in the operating rooms or the tremendous stress and endeavors they experience in the intensive care wards, trying to respond to the trumpet-calls for help during the night and frequently in order to engage in the battle with death, and also we must not forget the victims of occasional tragic helicopter crashes involving doctors flying to remote areas. Nevertheless, these noble “fighters” are bonded in a kind of magnificent brotherhood collaborating closely and magnanimously in their execution of the Hippocratic Art. And it is well known world-wide, that some of our colleagues go even further in their dedication to the Profession and to Humanity through their voluntary enlistment in noble organizations like **“Doctors of the World”, “Doctors without Borders”, “Doctors of the Heart”**, and as it is well known to me, the last one particularly distinguishing themselves by taking even their family members to the far corners of the earth. A real **“never - ending combat with the forces of life and death”**, as I have written in one of my poems:

*A thousand times a day
to be like Digenis*
a thousand times a day
fighting the Charon
in the marbling threshing field*

.....

* **Digenis Acritas**: A legendary hero in Greek popular poetry (Acritas: guard at the frontier of the Byzantine Empire)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The problem of Medical Ethics is today, undoubtedly, one of utmost urgency. The physician must, of course, decide as a specialized scientist, but he must also do so as a man among human beings.

The American poet **T.S. Elliot**, closing one of his lectures, discussing fundamental concerns of American life, said:

“You must understand that we face two types of problems in life. One kind of problem provokes the question: What are we going to do about it? The other kind poses the subtler questions: How do we behave towards it? The first type of problem demands relatively technical, pragmatic and tactical responses that will eliminate the difficulty; however the second type poses deeper challenges that no specific policy, strategy or behavior can dissolve. It requires behavior that sensitively, decorously and appropriately fits the perduring challenge”.

And no doubt about it that the above T.S. Eliot aspects are suitable to our behavior as physicians and it is fundamental to our relationship with the patient as well as, of course, to every other activity pertaining to our role as Health Workers. If the inter-personal relationship between physician and patient is truly rooted in the ancient fundamental principle that the doctor’s first priority is the well-being of the patient, then the

patient's absolute trust and optimal medical relief are guaranteed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live today in what is known as a **“globalized” world** where the citizens of our planet desperately search out their individual identities amongst the dizzying eddies of human pursuits and activities. In the midst of this whirlpool, I have always had and will ever continue to have a dream, to have a vision and that is:

To see a Torch Procession of a Worldwide New-Hippocratic Ideal spreading over the world and its precious flame remains alight wherever it may go, as I have expressed it in a poem of mine entitled ***“The Torch”***:

“A torch procession across the Earth”.

This poem has become a symbol and philosophy of the Department of Metabolic Unit (Endocrinology and Diabetes Mellitus) of the University of California (San Francisco), in which I had the good luck and the privilege to spent some years in my post-graduate studies. This poem ends as follows:

*Wherever, fellow, you go
in your struggle or noble endeavor
treasure this flame as you owe
that is the Torch to keep forever
and ever...*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The **Orient Express** has come to the end of its journey. Here is where **detective Hercule Poirot** dismounts from the train, and I myself step down from the podium.

The Medical Society has the will and the power, even in the midst of our globalized world, to treasure the ideals, the principles and the spirit of the Hippocratic Art, which means in other words:

“Back to Hippocrates”!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanking for your attention, I will close my speech with also a poem of mine which has the title: **“Back to Hippocrates”**:

Before I recite the poem, allow me to say the philosophical words of Hippocrates from his Oath:

“In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my Art”

Back to Hippocrates

*Yes!
We came back
to the Temple of your Art
to the Temple of Knowledge
to the Temple of Humanity
from where we first started
long time ago
from the depths of the centuries.*

*Yes!
We came back
to the Temple of your Art
and no doubt about it*

*that we
the dedicated servants of your Art
endowed with your noble wisdom,
your light
your spirit
your teaching
and under
your spiritual guidance
we will remain
to your eternal sacred march
forever and ever!*

Fotios Pavlatos, MD

The torch

*Now, that the time came
shall I light my Torch
in life's journey bright flame
will ever guide my thoughts.*

*That is the spirit, knowledge, faces
the humbleness, the roots and dreams,
the friendship, the universal places,
the avenues, fountains and streams.*

*Symbol, belief and hope there
a torch - procession across the earth
a hopeful message in the air
like spring's welcome birth.*

*Wherever, fellow, you go
in your struggle or noble endeavor
treasure this flame as you owe
that is the Torch to keep forever
and ever...*

Fotios Pavlatos, MD