

Charis Tzathas, MD (1954-2016)



For it would be better to die once and for all than to suffer pain for all one's life Aeschylus 525-456 BC, Prometheus Bound

Charis Tzathas, former President of the Hellenic Society of Gastroenterology (2011) and Medical Director of the GI Clinic of the Tzaneio Hospital, Piraeus, since 2007, died unexpectedly, on May

31, 2016, at the age of 62. The GI community mourns the loss of this leading light of the Hellenic Society of Gastroenterology (HSG). Charis Tzathas was born in Athens, Greece, on April 25, 1954, being the first son of John and Eugenia Tzatha. He graduated from Varvakeio High School (1972). Soon after, he began his medical studies at Athens University, where he met Iris, his co-student and sweetheart for 44 years. In 1980 he graduated and received his medical license. During his medical studies he revealed another aspect of his multitiered faculties, the artistic vocation expressed in a very successful career in the theatrical group of the University. He showed then the magnitude of his emotionally rich and sensible personality.

He performed his 2-year residency in Internal Medicine initially in the Athens Navy Hospital (1980 to 1981) and then in Kalamata Hospital (1983). He completed his GI fellowship in the Athens Airforce Hospital (1984 to 1986) and received his specialty in Gastroenterology in 1987. Almost immediately, he started working in Evangelismos Hospital, Athens, initially as Registrar and then as Senior Registrar. During the period 1990-1993 he traveled to England, where he worked as Research Registrar in Victoria Hospital, Blackpool, and in the Manchester Royal Infirmary. During April-June 1993 he was a Clinical and Research Fellow in the Hepatobiliary and Liver Transplantation Unit in the Royal Free Hospital, London. After his homecoming, he obtained his PhD from the Medical School of Athens University. From 2003 to 2007 he served in Attikon Hospital, Athens, in the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology. Since December 2007

he had occupied the post of Head of Department in the GI Clinic of the Tzaneio Hospital, Piraeus.

A charismatic speaker and gifted teacher, Charis was able to transmit the essential and meaningful messages. A skillful endoscopist, he was among the first and most dependable tutors of the European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy's Hands-on Training at United European Gastroenterology (UEG) Week. He was the author of many peer-reviewed articles and presented many oral or poster communications at national and international scientific congresses. In recent years, he had a more focused interest in inflammatory bowel diseases and was elected to the board of the Greek National Inflammatory Bowel Disease Society and a section of the European Crohn's and Colitis Organization (EOMIFNE). During his tenure as Secretary General (1999) and then President (2011) of the HSG, he was recognized by his colleagues as a bright, energetic, hard-working man, always trying to solve challenging problems. While always very kind, friendly and approachable, he did not hesitate to take difficult decisions when necessary, independently, and often against his own personal interest. During the last two years he was the HSG delegate to UEG. He was a pillar member of the Greek Institute of Gastroenterology & Nutrition (ELIGAST). He was also for many years the editorial team leader for the Institute's publications and he served on the board until recently.

Charis Tzathas's death marks the loss of an outstanding clinician and an indefatigable worker for the education of trainees. He was the educator and mentor of many trainees, inspiring them to view the practice of medicine as a model of honesty and efficacy. A member of the Official Committee for attribution of the National Diploma of Gastroenterology, he tried to help all new gastroenterologists, especially the outstanding ones in these tough years of crisis. Charis Tzathas was an exceptional person. To many of us, Charis represented the best of mankind, combining generosity, compassion and creativity. This is the great legacy he leaves to all of us. The immeasurable loss to the Greek and European medical community cannot be overestimated. He leaves his wife Iris, his daughter Alice, his beloved mother Eugenia and his brother Vasilis. He will be missed by many close friends and relatives, the world of Hellenic Medicine and Gastroenterology, and above all his patients.

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