



OBITUARY

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Obituary: Dimitrios Trichopoulos (1938–2014)

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It is with deep sadness that the public health community informed me of the passing of Dimitrios Trichopoulos, Professor and Director at the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health since 1989 (Figure 1), Professor of Cancer Prevention and the Director of the Center Cancer Prevention at Harvard University since 1992 and member of the Supreme Academy of Arts and Sciences in Athens.

Public health, community medicine and primary care has lost an academic teacher, an international researcher and a mentor for many distinguished colleagues who inspired many generations of physicians, teachers and researchers [1].

With over 900 publications as appear in PubMed, Prof. Trichopoulos' research has impacted the scientific world with an important contribution to medical research with a focus on cancer, where he pointed the role of passive smoking in lung cancer and chronic obstructive lung disease [2]. He also left behind important research on the aetiology of numerous cancers including breast cancer [3,4]. While he collaborated with many colleagues at Boston and in Europe working on the hypothesis that hormone-dependent cancers have their origin in the intra-uterine life [5]. He succeeded also to create and develop a strong Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology at the Medical Faculty, University of Athens by working until the end of his life to invest on capacity building and supporting the young and promised academicians.

In a period where compassion requires further research on the biological effect and evidence to support views and positions as serving as an independent determinant or asset of wellness and good health, his loss is more apparent. It is known that the greater compassion provided by social support lowers cortisol during stress as well as lower systolic and diastolic pressure and higher Frequency Heart Rate Variability (HF-HRV) [6].

Prof. Trichopoulos did not only stay in research on cancer, he was strongly involved in research where many invisible determinants of chronic illnesses have been highlighted



Figure 1 Dimitrios Trichopoulos, Professor of Cancer Prevention and the Director of the Center Cancer Prevention at Harvard University.

including the Mediterranean diet and siesta [7,8], where his joint work with Prof. Antonia Trichopoulou, his passionate wife, have illustrated.

Prof. Trichopoulos' recommendations to new researchers and especially to those who dedicate their time to primary care and health care services had a strong impact on their orientation, preferences and performance.

Prof. Trichopoulos was also acting as a mentor for me and I will never forget his supportive statements towards my work, many years ago when I was at the beginning of my career. His encouraging voice influenced and guided me through all my academic years. As Stephen Covey said, '*humility is the mother of integrity*,' [9] both were reflecting on Prof. Trichopoulos' work and performance. We will continue by teaching based on his principles.

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The future generations hopefully will learn from Prof. Trichopoulos' wisdom, passion and commitment to medical research and continue his journey.

Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from the individual's family for the publication of any accompanying images.

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