

# Greece



## 2017 European data

Inhabitants: 11.2 million
GDP per capita: \$27,737 (28 <sup>th</sup> )
Deceased donors pmp: 6.0 (32 <sup>nd</sup> )
All organ transplantations pmp: 18.9 (29 <sup>th</sup> )
All kidney transplantations pmp: 15.7 (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Deceased donor kidney transplantations pmp: 9.6 (28 <sup>th</sup> )
Living donor kidney transplantations pmp: 6.1 (19 <sup>th</sup> )



**Fig. 1.**

The chimera, a creature from Greek mythology referenced in Homer's *Iliad*, which is amalgam of a lion, snake and goat and has become a recognized symbol of transplantation. Apulian plate, 350BC, Musee Louvre

The origins of organ transplantation start in ancient Greek mythology wherein there are countless examples of metamorphoses, symbolic incarnations, demons, sirens, tritons and centaurs (*Fig. 1.*). There is no reference to transplantation in the current sense in the written sources of ancient Greek medicine. In addition, the dissection of the dead human body was forbidden by religious and social beliefs; surgical instruments were rudimentary (*Fig. 2.*)

The first cadaver kidney transplantation in contemporary Greece was performed on July 9, 1968, at the AHEPA University Hospital in Thessaloniki (*Fig. 3.*). The donor was

a 63-year-old man who succumbed after head trauma in a traffic accident three days earlier. The recipient was a 22-year-old soldier with end stage renal failure. The patient who had been hospitalized for three months was undergoing haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis at the 1<sup>st</sup> Department of Internal Medicine, Aristotle University Medical School, directed by Professor Dimitrios Valtis.





**Fig. 4.**

Professor Dimitrios Valtis, Professor Konstantinos Tountas and Associate Professor Aleandros Marsellos, AHEPA University Hospital, Aristotle University Medical School, Thessaloniki, Greece

The transplant operation was performed by Professor Konstantinos Tountas together with Associate Professor Aleandros Marsellos of the 1<sup>st</sup> Department of Surgery, Aristotle University Medical School (*Fig. 4.*). Postoperatively oliguria lasted for three weeks during which time the patient underwent haemodialysis through an arteriovenous silastic shunt. Subsequently, graft function became normal and the serum creatinine was 1.2 mg/dl. The recipient died 10 years later, in a motorcycle accident, having normal graft function.

The first living donor renal transplantation was performed at the AHEPA University Hospital in September 1970. Living donation was not allowed by Greek law at this time; special permit was obtained from the District Attorney of Thessaloniki. Professor Valtis and Menelaos Papadimitriou, together with the father of the recipient visited the District Attorney's office. The father claimed that if "I am not allowed to donate my kidney to my son, I will jump off the window to become a cadaveric donor". Finally, the special permit was given by the District Attorney. The transplantation performed by Professor Dimitios Lazaridis and Associate Professor Georgios Mplatzas. Renal transplantations were performed in the AHEPA University Hospital during the 1970's and 1980's, by Surgery Professors Dimitios Lazaridis and Panagiotis Spanos together with Internal Medicine Professor Achileas Tourkantonis.

The torch of transplantation was transferred to Agia Sophia – Hippokraton General Hospital of Thessaloniki by members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Department of Internal Medicine. Professor Panagiotis Metaxas established the 2<sup>nd</sup> Propedaetic Department of Medicine, together with Dr. Zafeirios Polymenidis who established the Immunology and Histocompatibility Laboratory. Later, Professor Menelaos Padimitriou, established the Department of Nephrology at The Aristotle University Medical School. In 1986, The Division of Organ Transplantation was established by Professor Antonios Antoniadis. The Hippokraton Hospital

became a leading transplant centre in Greece performing 1600 adult and 190 paediatric renal transplantations as well as 570 liver, pancreas and combined liver–kidney procedures. The Hippokration Hospital Transplant Centre continues today to perform renal and liver transplants, despite a low number of organ donors in Greece, due to the economic crisis of 2010–2018.

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# The History of the First Kidney Transplantation

– a European Overview

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