

# World Spirometry Day in Greece

## **Kostas I. Gourgoulianis**

Professor of Pneumology, Pneumology  
Clinic, Medical School, University of Thessalia,  
Rector of University of Thessalia

On December 6 2009, in Cancun, Mexico, 2010 was declared the Year of the Lung by the Forum of International Respiratory Societies, in recognition of the fact that millions of people throughout the world suffer from treatable and curable lung diseases. This declaration reports, among other data, that each year smoking is responsible for the death of 5 million people worldwide, of whom 1.3 million die from lung cancer. Pneumonia causes the death of one child every 15 seconds, while in the last 50 years there has been no advancement in antituberculosis drugs. Almost 50% of the planet's population lives in a polluted environment<sup>1</sup>. Professor N. Siafakas, President of the European Respiratory Society was the inspirer and planner of World Spirometry Day, October 14, 2010. In one of his recent articles in *Lancet* he underlined the role of respiratory societies in recording epidemiological data and organizing interventions at national and international levels<sup>2</sup>. Recently, World Spirometry Day was planned in Greece under the auspices of the Hellenic Thoracic Society, with excellent cooperation between teaching and National Health Service respiratory clinics, private pulmonologists and pharmaceutical companies. Informative pamphlets from the international initiative were translated and distributed all over the country. As the main event spirometry measurements were planned for the border islands of Dodekanese, and more than 300 people underwent spirometry in Symi, Tilos, Nisiros, and Rhodes. Throughout Greece, a total of 5,000 people underwent spirometry, of whom 700 were referred to a pulmonologist with a personal letter, because of pathological results. The number of spirometry measurements conducted in Greece that day was 1/5 of the total in Europe and outnumbered Australia, France and most other countries. Spirometry measurement was planned in 60 towns all over Greece - at Moudania, Edessa, Grevena, Tripoli and all the big cities. The majority of people who presented for measurement were males aged over 19 years. Finally, it was revealed that spirometry in Greece lacks recognition for use in children with asthma, which is consistent with reports in the international literature<sup>3</sup>.

World Spirometry Day in Greece highlighted not only the importance of this test in the diagnosis and prevention of chronic respiratory disorders, but also the essential role of the pulmonologist. It also pointed out that the successful cooperation of the state and private sectors will ultimately benefit respiratory medicine in this country.

### **Correspondence to:**

K.I. Gourgoulianis  
Professor of Pneumology, Pneumology Clinic,  
Medical School, University of Thessalia  
Tel.: +30-2410 682812  
E-mail: kgourg@med.duth.gr

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