

www.myasthma.gr

A greek website for patients with asthma

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Asthma is a chronic airways disorder that affects the everyday life of patients of all ages, from small children to elderly adults. Appropriate education of patients remains the cornerstone of effective asthma management. Busy clinicians, however, do not always have the luxury of spending sufficient time to respond to all their patients' questions about the disease, and patients with asthma seek information from any source to which they have access. Nowadays, the most common source of information is the internet, especially for the younger patients with asthma, but the information on chronic diseases that can be retrieved from a quick search on internet is not always valid or scientifically sound, and patients are often exposed to inaccurate and potentially dangerous messages. Several websites with information on asthma are available in English, but asthma webpages in Greek are scarce. This need for easy-to-retrieve and scientifically valid information for Greek patients with asthma led the Asthma Working Group of the Hellenic Thoracic Society to create the website www.myasthma.gr.

This is the first website designed specifically for patients with asthma in the Greek language by respiratory physicians with long-standing experience in the management of patients with asthma at all levels, from primary care practice to specialized asthma clinics in tertiary University hospitals. The Group aimed to create a personalized interface that would be easy and pleasant for the average user to access. This website was launched in April 2012 and over 5,000 individuals have already visited it.

The website provides general information on asthma and its symptoms and the basic diagnostic procedures and tests used in its investigation, as well as on allergies in general. A simple questionnaire is available, based on the European Community Research Health Survey that can help patients to identify symptoms of asthma that should lead them to consult a doctor. Detailed information on all the kinds of asthma medication and on the use of inhalers is provided in a special section, along with a list of simple measures that may help patients with asthma deal with their disease. A special section on asthma control, the cornerstone of the current management of asthma, is available, with a link to the Asthma Control Test that can be performed online by all visitors. Patients will also find useful tips about the triggers that may aggravate asthma, the basic management of an asthma attack and indications of when to contact their doctor in the case of worsening of their asthma. The site delineates the basic measures that can be

taken for achieving a normal life with asthma. Special sections cover asthma and exercise, asthma at school and at work and special types of asthma, including asthma in pregnancy and asthma in the young and the elderly. A section on asthma in childhood provides information for the parents of children with asthma. Finally, a special section on common questions and answers concerning asthma is available. A brief history of asthma and a section on famous people with asthma complete the information that is provided in the website. This website was created with the full support of the Board of the Hellenic Thoracic Society. In addition to the authors of this Editorial, other widely experienced physicians provided manuscripts for the various domains of www.myasthma.gr, including Dr. Christina Gratiou (exercise-induced asthma and asthma in athletes) and Dr. Manolis Paraskakis (asthma in children). Special thanks are due to the large group of respiratory physicians who have contributed by answering the questions that were submitted by users of the website in its first six months of operation (in alphabetical order): Charis Anagnostakos, Petros Bakakos, Eleni Gaki, Dimitris

Latsios, Konstatinos Porpodis, Nikoletta Rovina, Paschalis Steiropoulos, Eleni Tzortzaki, and Stelios Vittorakis.

On the website there is currently an announcement about the 1st painting contest for patients with asthma and their relatives, entitled "I paint for asthma". The contest is organized by the Hellenic Thoracic Society, Asthma Working Group. All candidates may send their paintings by post to the secretariat of the Hellenic Thoracic Society at: Sotiria Hospital of Chest Diseases of Athens, 152 Mesogeion Avenue, Athens 11527, tel. 2107487723, e-mail: htsinfo@otenet.gr, by the end of February 2013.

This website is intended for all patients with asthma, and also for all respiratory and primary care physicians, as an aid to the management of their patients. The website may be used as a stand-alone source of information for patients and their carers, but also as a complementary source of information for the busy clinician to suggest to his/her patients.

This website is available at <http://www.myasthma.gr/> and additional information may be found in the [myasthma.gr](http://www.myasthma.gr) Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/myasthma.gr>.