

Questions and Answers

Panagiotis Koulouvaris, M.D. and Kleio Mavragani, M.D., Ph.D. are the first Stavros S. Niarchos International Fellows

The Stavros S. Niarchos International Fellowship Exchange Program, a collaborative effort between the New York Chapter and The Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation, is a two-year international rheumatology and orthopaedic fellowship designed to provide Greek nationals the opportunity to participate in an adult/pediatric rheumatology or orthopaedic surgery program in a New York-based institution. Initiated in 2004, the program partnership has been renewed and two more fellows will be selected this year. The goal of the program is to encourage qualified Greek physicians and scientists to embark on careers in research related to arthritis and rheumatic diseases.

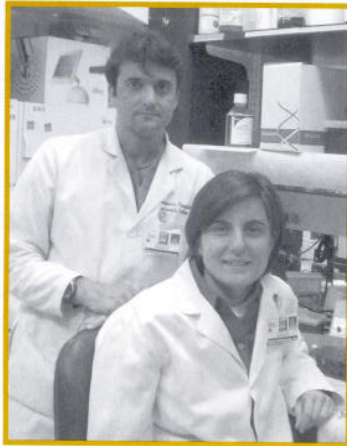
The first two Niarchos fellows are currently conducting research at the Hospital for Special Surgery. **Kleio Mavragani, M.D., Ph.D.** from Laikon General Hospital, Medical School, University of Athens, is examining the role of interferon- α in systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). **Panagiotis Koulouvaris, M.D.**, from the University of Ionnina Medical School, is focusing on joint replacement and the mechanisms of cell particle interaction involved in periprosthetic osteolysis. Here is what they had to say about their research in New York.

Q: What do you believe are the greatest benefits of global collaborative medical research programs?

A: Scientific knowledge is expanding at an unprecedented pace and it is an invaluable experience to be part of an established research team in another country.

Understanding the underlying mechanisms of disease is not an isolated effort, but requires a multi-disciplinary approach. The global academic environment offered through the fellowship program provides a unique opportunity to contribute to the exchange of medical knowledge and ideas, and to integrate the different areas of expertise among different parts of the world.

This combination of forces is key to the advancement of science, the maturation of young researchers, the establishment of new collaborations between their mentors, and finally, benefit for the patients...the ultimate goal.



Q: What impact has this Fellowship had on your career to date?

A: The two fellowship years are having an enormous impact...they include the most creative moments in our careers to date. The experience has broadened our intellectual horizons, helping us to better understand the principles of basic molecular mechanisms and to integrate that with a clinical knowledge of autoimmune diseases. We have established collaborations and friendships with young researchers from different institutions around the world.

We both believe this experience is the starting point for other fruitful interactions in the years to come. With the continuation of this successful fellowship program, all the Niarchos fellows will form an elite group of researchers to promote a global interest in rheumatology and orthopedics. Dr. Koulouvaris is already working on plans to establish the first Basic and Clinical Department to study joint replacement in arthritis patients at the University of Ionnina Medical School when he returns to Greece.