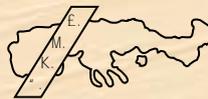
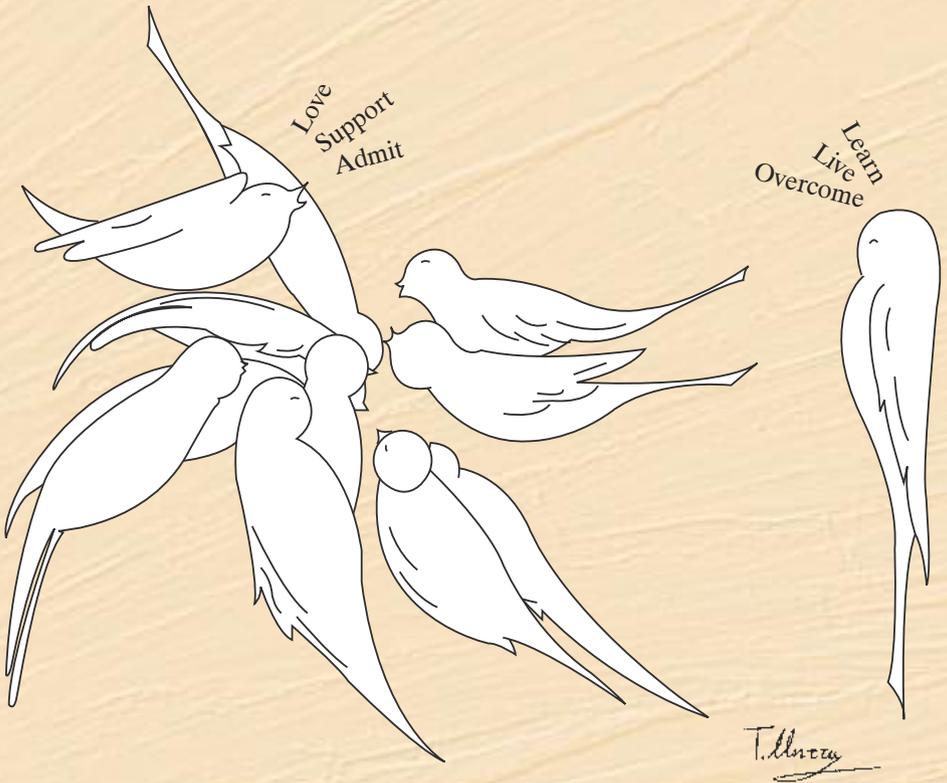


# “I can survive”



## SOCIETY OF CANCER-PATIENTS OF MACEDONIA-THRACE

65 Egnatias Str. - Thessaloniki (546 31) • Tel. +30 2310 241911, Fax +30 2310 221211

Meeting - Place: 96, Agiou Dimitriou Str., 1<sup>st</sup> floor

<http://www.sillogoskarkinopathon.gr> • e-mail: [info@sillogoskarkinopathon.gr](mailto:info@sillogoskarkinopathon.gr)

THESSALONIKI 2011



# “I can survive”

We are volunteers  
We beat cancer  
We look ahead in life  
We help the fellow-being  
We overcome our taboos  
We love you all.

*Persephone Mitta*



## SOCIETY OF CANCER-PATIENTS OF MACEDONIA-THRACE

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THESSALONIKI 2011

*“To accept and overcome your problem is bravery, to support your fellow-being so as to overcome her own problem is heroism, and to struggle not to happen to others what happened to you is divine”.*

**Georgios Blatzas**

*Assoc. Prof. Surg. A. U. TH.  
Director A' Surgical/Oncological  
Department of “Theageneion”  
Anti-Cancer Hospital of Thessaloniki*

*“Truth is like a medicine  
and has its own formula”*

*“The patient’s right to be informed”*

*Thessaloniki 1994*

**P. Mitta**

There are bank accounts for those who would like to support the voluntary work of S.C.M.T.:

**National Bank of Greece account No.:** 223/296210-19

**Eurobank account No.:** 0026.0232.57.0100310655

***English Translation/Editing:***

Zenia Katsouli-Karabela (2004 edition), Vassiliki Adampa (2010 edition)

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4<sup>th</sup> edition 2008 (in Greek)

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

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The booklet “I can survive” constitutes for all of us, cancer-patients in the Society, the most fundamental and important published booklet, because it includes in its pages the true message of life addressed to every friend-reader. This has been our target ever since the first edition, and we think that we have been successful as we moved on to its third edition.

We dedicate this booklet once again to our thousands of members and to the eighteen-year-old history of our Society that managed to support the fellow cancer-patient in her struggle for survival.

Thessaloniki, November 2006

*Persephone Mitta*

*President of the Society of Cancer-Patients  
of Macedonia-Thrace*

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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The success of the first edition (3.000 copies were printed and distributed within a year) and the increasing interest of the public led us to the decision to publish a second and even better edition of the booklet “I can survive”.

It started like a little newspaper and it became our book. In fact, our booklet is the very soul of our Society that grew just the same, blossomed and spread its aroma reaching all people. We were asked for a second edition and we reprinted it. We thank you all.

At this point, we would like to thank Mrs Triantafyllia Mitta, Art Historian, for her contribution to the edition. Her voluntary support through translations and the careful editing of all the texts reaches completion in the present work.

Thessaloniki, September 2002

*Persephone Mitta*

*President of the Society of Cancer-Patients  
of Macedonia-Thrace*

*Cover-page designed by Triantafyllia Mitta*

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## FOREWORD

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The publication of the booklet “I can survive” is a milestone for the ten-year-old presence of our Society. It was motivated by the need to record its most important events. But, as the years went by, it became an extensive, self-contained written work, from which it was necessary to remove material each time in order to maintain the form of the small, handy, “little newspaper”.

This has been its function among the many informative pamphlets published by our Society for a number of years (fifty [50] pamphlets so far): information about the work, the targets and the variety of its activities in the domain of health.

However, the booklet “I can survive” is something more than a simple listing of activities, because in its pages one can find love, warmth, the real soul of its creators, that is, the thousands of its members.

“As the leaves keep the wind’s shape”, “the little newspaper” has kept the shape, the knowledge, the living example of the people who have worked for it. Emotions we have felt, problems we have pinpointed in our struggle for the improvement of health conditions. Also, problems we have already solved and others that still exist and develop our dynamics, knowledge and experiences of our thirteen-year old volunteering.

But, above all, it includes in its pages the true message of life addressed to every friend-reader. This has been our target ever since the beginning of this publication: through examples that “paint better than a thousand words” life in its essence, we try to support the faith of our fellow beings.

Finally, we dedicate this booklet to the ten-year-old presence of our Society with the hope that “its words will grow”, that its presence will be so strong that “the wind of grief, of wickedness, of prejudice, of absence around us will stop blowing...”.

Thessaloniki, March 2000

*Persephone Mitta*

*President of the Society of Cancer-Patients  
of Macedonia-Thrace*

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## **Extract from the CHARTER**

### **of the Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace**

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Through the difficult moments of our medical treatment sprang out the idea of getting close together through an organisation that would care about our psychological and physical problems. The love and care for the suffering fellow-being cancer patient led us to the quick establishment of “THE SOCIETY OF CANCER-PATIENTS OF MACEDONIA-THRACE”. That unprecedented fact gave joy and optimism to all cancer-patients and their relatives.

Thus, in the course of approximately four difficult years in the complicated paths of our disease, we gained tremendous experience, so that we can surely alleviate the pain and offer faith, courage, hope, joy and relief to our fellow-being cancer patient.

With faith in God and with the strength deriving from Him, we move forward with determination and courage towards the goal we have voluntarily set.

### **WHO ARE WE?**

We are simply CANCER-PATIENTS who experienced all the problems of cancer and we became SELF-ORGANISED in this Society, which is a non-profit organisation of mutual aid. In addition, we offer our services voluntarily and without any material benefit or other self-interest.

### **WHICH ARE THE GOALS OF OUR SOCIETY?**

- a. The mutual aid among our members for the achievement of a complete and, if possible, total rehabilitation.
- b. The psychological preparation of those who are going to be under any form of treatment for the cure of any kind of cancer and the welcoming of new cancer-patients, in order to be prepared to face the needs of their future everyday life as cancer-patients.

- c. The cooperation with specialised scientists, doctors-oncologists of University Hospitals and of all private or public Institutions, for the purpose of the direct contact between doctor and patient for her own information and adjustment to the most modern medical developments.
- d. The cultivation of a spirit of fellowship, friendship and love among cancer patients, as well as the creation of a family-like environment among them in the broadest sense.
- e. The ability to inform the public about the ways of helping and supporting cancer patients, and the development of a real friendship with all those who would be willing to help achieve, in any way and by any means, the goals of our Society.
- f. The constant concern and care for the avoidance of every social activity of any kind which would be out of the main and chief purpose of our Society, which is HEALTH, SPIRITUAL WELFARE and the TOTAL REHABILITATION of its members.

### **WHICH ARE OUR ACTIVITIES TODAY?**

We visit the cancer patients in Hospitals, in their homes and anywhere they might be.

We encourage the cancer patients and we offer them our experience regardless of whether they are members of our Society or not.

We inform the family members of the cancer patients on ways of behaving and nursing.

We help the cancer patients be incorporated once again in society and we guide them to find the way to get all the benefits instituted by the state.

We participate in all the lectures, seminars and conventions about cancer and we bring to the members of our Society their conclusions as well as scientific research reports and the application of modern treatment methods.

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP OUR GOALS

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- By simply not behaving with indifference. Because bad behaviour burdens us with additional psychological complexes. We, too, are citizens of equal rights like the others.
- By offering us LOVE.
- By introducing us to any other cancer patient you know who has not been informed about our activities yet.
- With your financial support. The fulfilment and promotion of our goals, according to our Society's charter, very often –almost always– cost too much.



*Photo: The office (secretariat) of S.C.M.T.*

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## TARGETS – ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

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*Extract from the talk of the President of S.C.M.T. Mitta Persephone in a conference of the Greek Association of Psycho-social Oncology, on 8-12-2002*

“...The needs of cancer patients made me establish this Society of Cancer-patients in 1989.

This is a group of volunteers who are all patients. We have reached 4,000 members, while there are also about 200 volunteers, specialised scientists (psychologists, physical therapists, etc.) who offer their services voluntarily.

Throughout this period of operation we pinpointed deficiencies and problems concerning the domain of cancer, we experienced the needs (since the members of our Society are all patients themselves), we struggled with a reality which is totally negative.

There has been progress –I believe that our Society helped achieve such a progress. Looking back, I can see a few sparkles of light. An oasis during our thirsty struggle.

Yet, at other times, I feel as if I have just begun. Problems, that grow like a malignant tumour, challenge our strength, still, they cannot wither us; on the contrary, they make us struggle even more for improvement in this domain.

There are doctors who do not name the disease, who do not want the patient to know that she/he has cancer. A few days ago a doctor told me: “Our people are underdeveloped. They do not know and cannot react to the disease in the right way”.

I get angry with such a comment. We are not like that. Don't let them treat us like an object. These are the words that I tell the patients and a lot more.

In order to gain what belongs to us, the right to live, the right to decide for ourselves and not the others for us, we have developed a number of activities and we have set targets in our Society.

We already have 125 proposals for improvement in the domain of cancer...”.

We fight for their materialisation, which will contribute to the improvement of health conditions in our country. They have to do with hospital infrastructure, the relationships and the rendering of services by doctors, nurses, patients.

The following are the goals of our Society from the year of its establishment (1991) up to now. They are presented in themes, something that was considered absolutely necessary for better comprehension and promotion of the work of our Society.

The asterisk (\*) on the left of some titles shows that the goal has been achieved, while the dash (-) shows that the struggle continues.

## **A. IN GENERAL**

### **Establishment of a voluntary organisation**

- \* Establishment of a voluntary organisation in the domain of health. Establishment of the first Society of purely voluntary character (all those who work with us, instructors, organisers, people responsible for programmes, speakers, are all volunteers).
- \* The establishment of local societies in every city of Greece, with the same spirit of offering to the cancer patients, that is, the encouragement and support of any individual initiatives.
- \* Goal of our Society: The establishment of a Federation in Greece (since 1991, year of its establishment). It was achieved in 2004.
- \* Unanimous decision of all societies of cancer-patients in Europe concerning the establishment of the European Cancer Patient Coalition (E.C.P.C.).
- \* Federation's goal to be incorporated into the National Federation of People with Special Needs.
- \* Issuing of an "identity-membership card" of our Society and informing about the patient's rights through a special pamphlet.
- \* Establishment of a group for voluntary blood donation only for the members of our Society.
- \* A proposal to the Archdiocese of Greece for a regular voluntary blood donation programme in every parish.

## Hospitals

- \* A proposal of our Society to the Peripheral National Health System-Ministry of Health and Welfare for the building of a paediatrics hospital in Thessaloniki for children cancer patients. It was achieved in 2007. Minister of Health: D. Avramopoulos.
- \* The transfer of “Theageneion” Anti-cancer Hospital to the Municipality of Mikra. It was achieved in 2007. Minister of Health: D. Avramopoulos.
- \* The immediate operation of “Papageorgiou” Hospital (1998).
- \* Transfer of the Child-Oncology Department of AHEPA Hospital to the New-born baby wing for better nursing conditions.
- \* Expansion of the Child-Oncology Department of “Hippocrateion” Hospital in the Mediterranean Anaemia department for better nursing conditions.
- \* Establishment of a Pathology-Oncology Clinic in AHEPA hospital.
- \* Establishment of a Pathology-Oncology Clinic in the B’ IKA (Social Security Institution) Panagia Hospital.
- \* Establishment of a hostel in Thessaloniki and Athens for the walking cancer- patients. (It has been a target of our Society since 1989).
- Establishment of a Hospice for patients whose health is aggravated and they need special nursing. This Hospice should have doctors, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, social workers, a priest and volunteers of S.C.M.T.
- \* Renewal of the diagnostic equipment in hospitals and clinics (digital mammography, Pet Scan, etc.)
- \* Renewal of the radio-therapy equipment in AHEPA Hospital.
- Establishment of a chair of Oncology in the Universities of Athens-Thessaloniki with specialities like: Pathology Oncology, Surgical Oncology, Radio-therapy Oncology, Haematology Oncology, Paediatric Oncology etc.
- Cooperation of doctors of different specialities (oncological councils) in order to fully cope with patient’s problems.
- \* Cooperation of the societies of cancer-patients in Greece with the Greek Society of Oncologists Pathologists for the best quality of the patient’s life.
- \* Establishment of the family doctor.

- \* Constant medical attendance by the same doctor at the outpatients' department.
- \* Demand of the parents of children with neoplastic disease; at least a monthly visit to the doctor who is responsible for the treatment of their child.
- Establishment of a counselling group especially for young people who have overcome their problem with cancer and they are in the process of creating their own family.
- Establishment of positions for specialists in psychology, sexology, physiotherapy, dietetics, physiotherapy for lymphatic massage, in all hospitals of the city.
- \* Educational programs for the doctors, medical assistants, working people in the hospitals of Greece.
- \* Establishment of psychological support groups by medical students at the oncological clinics for children of the “AHEPA” and “HIPPOCRATEION” hospitals.
- A group of volunteers especially for children with cancer consisting of a psychologist, an oncologist paediatrician, a priest, a social worker, the manager of the department, a representative of the parents' society “Lampsi” and a representative of S.C.M.T..
- A group of volunteers in hospitals consisting of an oncologist pathologist, a psychologist, a social worker, the manager of the department, a priest and a representative of S.C.M.T. in all hospitals for the patient's support and aid.
- \* A group of volunteers for the aid of the cancer patient's family.
- \* Removal of the “top secret” policy concerning the patient's file. The patient has the right to “a second opinion”.
- \* Request and target of the patients: Cancer has to be called by its name.
- Abolition of the unlawful practice of some doctors who receive extra money in an envelope.
- Abolition of the afternoon surgery in hospitals.
- \* Abolition by law of the financial burden of the patients that is imposed on them for their chemotherapeutic drugs –especially for the indirectly insured of the public sector.
- \* Possibility of granting drugs to the insured of IKA (Social Security

Institution) through the hospitals, where they are under chemotherapy treatment and not only at the B' IKA (Social Security Institution) "PANAGIA" hospital.

- \* Prolongation of the validity time for the prescriptions of the pain-killing drugs given to cancer patients (from medical centres treating pain).
- \* Exemption of the patients from the transportation expenses from the hospital to their home after each treatment. The collection of money (e.g. of taxi-fares) can be done by the Insurance Funds.
- \* Improvement of the accommodation and treatment areas: establishment of a special screen between the patients' beds; a refrigerator and a telephone for each hospital ward, etc.
- \* A television provided by S.C.M.T. for the waiting-rooms of the following hospitals (since 1993): "Theageneion" Anti-Cancer Hospital, "Papanikoloaou" and "AHEPA".
- \* A blood and bone marrow bank in cooperation with centres in Thessaloniki and Athens.
- \* A sperm bank in cooperation with similar centres in Thessaloniki and Athens.
- \* A campaign to inform the public about the harmful consequences of smoking. Prohibiting smoking by law in hospitals and public services.

### **People with Special Needs**

- \* Special parking areas for people with special needs and volunteers in hospitals and public services.
- \* Special parking areas for people with special needs in the city centre and in front of big department stores.
- \* A special ramp in all hospitals, institutions (homes for the aged etc.), public services, banks and stores for the easy access of people with special needs.
- \* A special rail at the entrance of buildings for the support and safety of people with special needs.
- \* Priority in all services for people with special needs.
- \* Possibility to get on mass transportation vehicles from the front entrance only for people with special needs.
- \* A list of shops with disability items for our members.

- \* New positions and more opportunities for work for people with special needs.

## **B. S.C.M.T.**

### **a. Financial support**

- \* Office: a free grant by “THEAGENEION” hospital to our Society for secretarial services until 1-6-2006 .
- \* Apartment: a free grant by Mrs. A. Papatheodorou until 2003 to use the apartment for the meetings of the psychological support groups.
- \* Apartment: a free grant by the family of Chatzopoulos Efstathios until 2003 to use the apartment as a hostel for children cancer-patients.
- \* Storehouse: free grant by Ms. G. Xanthopoulou until 2005.
- \* Storehouse: free grant by Ms. V. Avramidou since 2006.
- \* Ensuring permanent accommodation at 96 Ag. Dimitriou Street in 2003 for the Society’s programmes (psychological support groups etc.).
- \* Ensuring permanent accommodation (purchase of an office) for secretarial services in 2007.
- \* Ensuring a storing space for the Society’s needs.
- \* Ensuring a means of transportation for the members of S.C.M.T.
- \* Financial support to the needy by our Society’s resources.
- \* Distribution of food supplies to needy families (Ms. Maria Lioliou’s offer).
- \* Participation in Prefecture programmes for withdrawn products. Distribution of surplus fruits to the members of our Society.
- \* Participation in the programme organised by the Directorate of Agriculture. Distribution of food supplies to our Society’s members.
- \* Participation in the voucher distribution programme for the needy citizens organised by the Municipality of Thessaloniki every Christmas and Easter Holidays.
- \* Cooperation with department stores in Thessaloniki. Possibility of purchasing goods at a discount price, all year long, for our Society’s members.
- A discount in the telephone bills [(OTE-Greek Telecommunications Organisation) 1000 call units] for our Society’s members.
- \* Organising groups of volunteers-medical assistants (nurses) in every part of Thessaloniki. Free services to the needy members of our So-

ciety (e.g. medicine shots).

- \* Creative skills group, construction of handicrafts for sale as revenue for the Society.
- \* Putting money-boxes in stores, banks, etc. for the Society's financial support.
- \* A charity lottery for the Society's financial support.

## **b. Psychological Support**

- \* A program of psychological support for our members in the meeting room of our Society (club) in cooperation with a group of scientists.
- \* A program of individual psychological support and self-aid among patients suffering from the same kind of cancer (meeting place of our Society).
- \* Groups of creative skills (e.g. painting, choir, dance, theatre, physiotherapy, Holy Bible study, etc.) for the psychological support of our Society's members and their smooth reintegration into the Greek Society. (There are 25 groups today)
- \* Volunteer training group.
- \* A trailer-kiosk for the distribution of hot drinks (coffee, milk, cookies etc.) to the patients and their companions at the Hospitals "THEAGENEION" Anti-Cancer Hospital, "AHEPA", "PAPA-GEORGIU" and "G. PAPANIKOLAOU".

## **c. Information – Prevention**

### **1. Lectures**

- \* Information sessions about every kind of cancer addressed to the members of our Society by doctors-speakers; these sessions take place during presentations and other activities at the meeting place of our Society.
- \* Informing the public: lectures by doctors and members of our Society about cancer in municipalities, societies, working places etc.
- \* Presentation of topics about cancer by colleagues, friends, members of our Society through the mass media.
- \* Informing pupils. Organising open discussions at schools on the following topics: a) smoking, b) cancer prevention and c) professional consciousness.
- \* Organising a yearly meeting with the final-year medical students of

the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, at the lecture amphitheatre of the AHEPA Hospital, and, at the same time, delivering speeches by members of our Society in order to begin a dialogue and cooperation between doctors and patients.

- \* Participation of our Society in conventions in Greece and abroad about cancer.

## **2. *Publishing Activities***

- \* Informing the public on topics like prevention and special kinds of cancer through the constant publishing activities of our Society (fifty [50] informative pamphlets have been published and distributed for free to Greek citizens).
- \* Informing our members about their rights and obligations through 15 diptych and triptych pamphlets.
- \* Sending the already published material to the National Library of Greece.
- \* Sending the published material (of our Society) to institutions and libraries throughout Greece (municipal, public, university libraries, as well as to the libraries of hospitals, ministries, schools etc).
- \* Establishment of the library of our Society with medical topics in order to inform the patients.
- \* Establishment of a mobile library in “Theageneion” Anti-cancer Hospital, “AHEPA”, “Papageorgiou” and “G. Papanikolaou” Hospitals, with our Society’s publications about various types of cancer.
- \* Promotion of our Society’s publications in newspapers and magazines (publications of extracts).
- \* A column in a local newspaper of Thessaloniki with topics concerning cancer.
- \* Publication of a newspaper of the Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace.
- \* Creating our own website on the Internet.

## **3. *Promotion of the activities of our Society***

- \* Suspending of a poster of our Society to all hospitals, clinics, public services.
- \* Circulation of a phone card (Greek Telecommunications Organisation) with the logo of our Society.

- \* Transmission of a TV spot with a social message about the work of our Society. (Permission granted by the National Radio-Television Council)
- \* Telephone communication throughout the day for the support and information of cancer patients.
- Granting by the Greek Telecommunications Organisation of a four-digit number for free calls of citizens to our Society.

#### **d. Entertainment of the members of our Society**

- \* The Workers' Home provides tickets of social tourism and organises excursions for the members of our Society.
- \* The State Theatre of Northern Greece provides tickets to the members of our Society.
- \* Free entrance to night-clubs of Thessaloniki for the members of our Society.
- \* Integration into the Ministry of Health and Welfare programme - Hosting of the members of our Society in its camp sites during the summer period.
- \* Our Society organises excursions.
- \* Annual Ball of our Society.

#### **e. Social activities (of members of our Society)**

- \* Blessing at the beginning of the academic year (on Monday of the third week of September since 1991, year of the establishment of our Society).
- \* Ceremony of Cutting and Consecration of the Bread on the day of the celebration of Zoodochos Pigi (Life-Giving Source), who is the Patron Saint of our Society (since 1991).
- \* “Cutting of the Vassilopita (New Year cake)”, a gathering of members of our Society (on one of the first 10 days of January).
- \* “Cracking of the eggs”. An annual Easter meeting of the members of our Society (on Monday after the Sunday of Saint Thomas).
- \* Commemoration Mass of the deceased members of our Society (on Saturday of the last week of November).
- \* Regular meetings of the members of our Society throughout the year and once each month during the summer in a meeting place of our Society or elsewhere.

- \* Birthday-parties for children cancer patients at the oncological clinics for children in Thessaloniki. Distribution of presents, surprises, birthday cakes etc.
- \* Creative occupation with painting lessons for children at the oncological clinics for children. (AHEPA-HIPPOCRATEION Hospitals). Annual and monthly awarding of prizes for the best painting by distinguished artists of the city.
- \* “Tell me your wish and it will come true”, a game of wishes for children cancer patients at hospitals of the city (since 1993).
- \* Bingo, a psychology and skills game for children patients at hospitals of the city.
- \* Organising carnival parties (with masks, serpentines, dances) at the oncological clinics for children in Thessaloniki.
- \* Celebration of Mother’s Day at the oncological clinics for children in Thessaloniki with cakes, presents and surprises.
- \* Groups of companions for outings and entertainment of disabled children cancer patients.
- \* Groups visiting other institutions of the city with parallel educational and social activities.
- \* “Easter Celebration”: members and the choir of our Society visit hospitals of Thessaloniki and distribute presents (eggs, buns, etc) to the patients, children and adults (on Tuesday of the Holy Week).
- \* “Christmas Celebration”: members and the choir of our Society visit hospitals of Thessaloniki and distribute presents to the patients, children and adults.
- \* “Cutting of the Vassilopita (New Year cake)”: “Theageoneion” Anti-cancer Hospital, “AHEPA”, “Papageorgiou” and “Papanikolaou” hospitals during the first 10 days of January.

#### **f. In general**

- \* In cooperation with specialists, our Society helps children to visit other research centres abroad.
- \* A proposal of our Society: the admission of children cancer patients to the national universities without entrance exams.
- \* Another proposal of our Society: an annual marathon by our members in order to communicate a message of life.

*Persephone Mitta*

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## A HOSTEL

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“**A** hostel. What a sweet word! A home in the city, filled with the love of the volunteers. There, I had my own room to give shelter to the pain, the despair, the loneliness, the love, the children.

Athens. There is nothing in this city. I remember that, during a year of treatment, I badly needed a hostel. Such a place does not exist. Where did I stay? Nowhere, when it was needed. By the way, where did all those people, coming from the islands and other parts of Greece and having the same needs with me, stay?

Thessaloniki. Nothing there, as well. Where do all these people who come from other places stay? From districts like Macedonia and Thrace? Emergency solutions? The benches of the hospitals, the basements, in the park of the hospital during summertime or in the cars. What a shame!

A hostel. I visited the Anti-Cancer Association (Mr. Dondas) in 1989, the Oncological Surgery Association (Mr. Garas), the office of the European Communities etc.

Thessaloniki. I called the Directors of the Clinics of “Theageneion” Anti-Cancer Hospital (Mr. P, Mr. M, Mr. B, Mr. P. etc.) and the Directors of other hospitals (Mr. X etc.).

I visited government officials, the Minister of Health and Welfare, the Minister of Macedonia-Thrace, the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, the Municipality of Thessaloniki, and church representatives. They promised me a lot. I want only one thing: a hostel.

Silence, it is strange. No, it is not strange, this domain is cruel. However, to struggle is even crueler. And I have struggled. It is cruel to feel that your enemy is not only cancer itself, but also indifference, self-interests, selfishness. It is hard to fight, harder to leave behind but I made it. I stood up, I fought, I won. **A hostel, at last!**

I want to thank all those who lent me their ear and heard my voice that, in a certain moment, was almost lost in the accumulated need.

I want to thank all those who, at a certain point, extended their hand and helped me to stand on my feet.

I want to thank those who painted our pain.

I thank God who allowed me to enjoy the happy end of my struggle. **A hostel.**

I owe my joy to many people. Among them, I am most grateful to Mr. Valasopoulos, former District Director of Thessaloniki, and his team.

A great ‘thank you’ to all, because they all helped me positively or negatively to go on.”

*Persephone Mitta, President of S.C.M.T.*

*Thessaloniki, March 2000*

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## THE RIGHTS OF THE CANCER PATIENT

### by the state and insurance funds

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1. Disability pension.
2. A welfare allowance for “those not insured and those who are indirectly insured”. (Under the following conditions): a) Submission of a recent medical opinion by a hospital doctor to the Directorate of Health (15 Monastiriou Street) and b) submission of an application to the above committee.
3. Pass (free or discount ticket of transportation) for the urban and intercity means of transportation. The urban ones for free and the intercity ones with 50% discount (e.g. Greek Railway Organisation and Joint Bus Receipts Fund).
4. Tax exemption. (No 3 and No 4 are valid for all, regardless of their insurance fund. The conditions are the same as those for the welfare allowance).
5. Artificial members.
6. Physiotherapies.
7. Artificial breast and bra for mastectomies every two years.
8. Wig for chemotherapies.
9. Orthopaedic aid (crutches etc.) every two years.
10. Free medicine by all insurance funds.
11. Exclusive (private) nurse. (For the patients who are bedridden in hospitals and they are directly insured).
12. People with lung cancer, who are insured by the Social Security Institution, have the right to receive an allowance for air therapy from the 8<sup>th</sup> up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of the next year.
13. All the insured citizens of all insurance funds have the benefit of tickets of social tourism every year and of excursions 8, 3, 1 day long from the Workers’ Home.
14. A shorter military service for the first child, when the parent has a disability percentage of 67% and the second child is yet under age.
15. The child cancer patient is exempted from military service.
16. As soon as the disability pensioners of the Social Security Institution become 60 years old, they can change their (disability) pension into a retirement one because the amount of pension increases.

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL  
NEEDS ARE SERVED  
IN PRIORITY



MINISTER'S DECISION  
No. A6/27299

---

## THE RIGHTS OF THE PATIENT

### who is hospitalised in a Greek hospital

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You have the right, according to law, to:

1. Understand and use these rights. If, for any reason, you are unable to understand them or you need help, then the hospital must offer you help, including someone in charge.
2. Accept treatment without any discrimination with regard to race, colour, religion, gender, country of origin or financial status.
3. Receive gentle and attentive care in a clean and safe environment without unnecessary limitations.
4. Have special care, if you need it.
5. Demand the enforcement of the law prohibiting smoking in all hospital areas.
6. Have all necessary information available.
7. Have at your disposal a team of oncologists (oncological councils) which will decide jointly the appropriate treatment (e.g. cytologist, pathologist, radiotherapist, surgeon etc.)
8. Get informed about the name and the position of the doctor who will be responsible for you in the hospital.
9. Know the names, the positions and the duties of the people who are responsible for your care; moreover, you have the right to deny any comment, examination or treatment by anyone of them.
10. Receive all information regarding the diagnosis, the treatment and the prognosis.
11. Receive all the necessary information before giving your consent to any recommended method of treatment. This information must include the potential dangers or benefits from the method of treatment.
12. Ask for the removal of the “top secret” policy concerning the patient’s file. The patient has the right to a “second opinion”.

13. Deny treatment on condition that you have already been informed about its potential effect on your health.
14. Deny participating in laboratory research. You have the right for a full explanation when deciding whether to participate or not in such research.
15. When you are in hospital, you have the right to receive confidential and secret information regarding any issue of your medical file.
16. Participate in all decisions regarding your treatment and your discharge from the hospital. The hospital must give you a discharge note.
17. Ask to be informed about the rights instituted by the state for you (allowance, pass, tax exemption).
18. Ask to be informed whether there is a psychologist (a social worker, a sexologist etc.) in the hospital for the good psychological condition and quality of life of the patient.
19. Ask to be informed whether there is a physiotherapist and a dietician in the hospital for the patient's prompt reintegration in society.
20. Examine your medical record and take a medical copy, for which you will be charged. You cannot be denied a copy in case you are unable to pay for it.
21. Complain without fear for the care and the services provided and ask even for a written answer by the hospital. If you are not satisfied with the answer, you can complain to the hospital's manager.

*Persephone Mitta*

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## THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE PATIENT

### who is hospitalised in a Greek hospital

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This report has been designed in order to show that S.C.M.T. believes in mutual trust, respect and cooperation which are the foundation for the provision of quality medical treatment.

When you are hospitalised in Greek hospitals, you have the following obligations:

1. Be punctual on the day and at the time you have an appointment at the outpatients' department, having with you the hospital's card and medical examinations.
2. If there is an alteration in the appointment, you should inform by phone the person in charge for the hospital's better operation.
3. If you are admitted to the hospital, you should take with you only what is necessary (like clothing, health booklet etc.), so that the area is kept clean and tidy.
4. Avoid taking with you valuable things like jewellery, etc.
5. You must be clean and maintain the hygiene conditions for everyone's benefit.
6. The hospitalised must contribute to the preservation of a quiet hospital environment.
7. Companions and patients must respect the hospital's property.
8. Be polite and discreet towards other patients and the hospital's staff.
9. You must cooperate with the hospital if it is necessary to be transferred to another room.
10. Give accurate and precise information regarding your previous diseases, medication etc.
11. Talk to the doctor and/or nurse if your condition changes or there are problems during your treatment.
12. Respect the hospital's policy regarding the prohibition of smoking.
13. Keep the visiting hours and inform the visitors about the relevant regulation. The relatives must respect the peace hours of the patient, whether s/he is their own sick person, or for any other fellow being in the same ward.

14. For the better cooperation and information of the patient, the family must realise that only one companion, along with the patient, will undertake to ask the doctor all the necessary questions.
15. Avoid asking the doctor too many questions when his/her surgery has finished.
16. If you need a private nurse, ask the hospital's relevant service.
17. Try to see your doctor during the morning and not during the afternoon surgery.
18. It is a prerequisite to get informed whether your doctor has completed his oncology speciality, e.g. pathologist oncologist, haematologist oncologist, etc.
19. Know that receiving extra money in an envelope is prohibited for the hospital's doctors and nurses.
20. If you feel unfairly treated, go to the hospital's manager for your complaints and do not yell in the corridors.
21. It is your right to learn the results of the medical council.
22. It is the patient's right to get a "second opinion", so his/her file can be taken upon an application and giving in his/her ID in the hospital.
23. Once you are discharged from the hospital, it is your right to ask for an informative note along with the discharge one.
24. It is your own responsibility if you are discharged from the hospital without being fully informed about your health problems.
25. It is your own responsibility if you do not know that you have cancer and the exact kind of cancer.
26. It is also your own responsibility if your doctor has not informed you about the treatment you will follow.
27. The Society has prepared a set of questions, which can be found in the following page; just choose to ask the ones which are representative for you.
28. Do not forget to smile, even when in pain, because this smile is health for the one who offers it, as well as for the one who receives it.
29. It is our pleasure, as former patients, to be by your side whenever you need us.

*Persephone Mitta*

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## PATIENTS' QUESTIONS

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1. What did the biopsy show? What kind of cancer have I got?
2. How soon can a specialist see me?
3. Is the doctor who will examine me a recognised specialist in oncology?
4. Can I ask for a second opinion?
5. Is there any case for my cancer to metastasize? Which are the probabilities of a relapse?
6. Should I be under chemotherapy treatment? For how long? Which are the undesirable side effects?
7. Am I going to be under radiotherapy treatment? How many radiation sessions should I have? Which are the side effects, direct and in the long run?
8. Are there any alternative solutions?
9. What is hormone therapy? Why do we do it? Which are the side effects?
10. What is immunotherapy? Why do we do it?
11. What is biological therapy? Why do we do it?
12. Can this tumour be operated or not?
13. Can we avoid an amputation? How?
14. Which are my treatment choices? What is the percentage of success?
15. Is there any hereditary aggravation in my disease?
16. To whom should I turn for help if I have complaints for my treatment, the prognosis, the diagnosis?
17. Where can I get any information about my rights as a patient?
18. Who can offer the support my family and I need, before and after treatment?
19. Is my family doctor going to be informed about my condition before the diagnosis? Is s/he going to help me?
20. What kind of medication shall I get?
21. Shall I vomit? Can I avoid it? Shall I lose any hair?
22. What should I do if I am constantly in pain?
23. How is my mood going to be? When should I call my doctor?
24. I feel very tired. What can I do about it?
25. Can I work? Can I exercise myself?
26. Shall I return to my every day activities?
27. Is sun exposure prohibited? Should I avoid people in cramped places?
28. What should I do with my eating habits during and after my treatment?
29. How often should I have my check-up?
30. Can I have my breast restored? When and how?
31. Does the period stop after radiation therapy, chemotherapy or hormone therapy?
32. What should I know about sex?
33. Is there a sperm bank in order to keep my sperm before the beginning of my treatment?
34. Is there going to be a sterility problem for me or related problems (from birth) for my children, because of the treatment?
35. I would like to have an information note.

*Persephone Mitta*

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## S.C.M.T. GROUPS

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The adjustment to the changes brought about by cancer becomes easier for the cancer-patients, as well as for their families, when they receive useful information and support services.

The following is what the Board of the Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace has organised during the winter periods since 1992:

### GROUP SESSIONS

- 1) A closed group for the psychological support of cancer-patients.
- 2) An open group for the psychological support of cancer-patients.
- 3) A group for the psychological support of the cancer-patient's family.
- 4) Open discussion groups (coffee time).
- 5) Bible study class.
- 6) Self-consciousness class.
- 7) Sophrology class.
- 8) Drama therapy class.
- 9) Drama class.
- 10) Theatrical game class.
- 11) Music class.
- 12) Music therapy class.
- 13) Traditional Greek dances class.
- 14) Choir class.
- 15) Drawing class.
- 16) Aromatherapy class.
- 17) Physiotherapy - stress management class.
- 18) Orthostatic exercises class.
- 19) Sewing class.
- 20) English – Italian class.
- 21) Volunteer training class.
- 22) History class.
- 23) Decoration class.
- 24) Lymphatic Massage.
- 25) Patient to Patient session. Psychologist to Patient session.

Cooperation with a psychologist from the United States 2-3 times a year.

The above classes have been organised for all those cancer patients who believe that life goes on in spite of cancer. The participation in these activities is free.

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## S.C.M.T. LECTURES

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S.C.M.T. has organised since 1991 a series of lectures in order to inform the public on topics regarding cancer prevention and treatment. These activities take place in a special, well-organised meeting-place of our Society (Meeting-place, 96 Agiou Dimitriou Street, Thessaloniki).

- 1) 13.02.1994 Topic “The doctor-patient relation”.
- 2) 01.07.1996 » “Groups of self-aid and psychological support among the members”.
- 3) 30.03.1996 » “Chemotherapy and you”.
- 4) 27.05.1996 » “Radiation and you”.
- 5) 30.10.1996 » “Skin cancer and sun-bathing”.
- 6) 19.02.1997 » “The results of the convention at Brighton, England (10-12.10.1996): “Cancer beyond Medicine”.
- 7) 09.05.1997 » “Psychological support for people who have suffered from cancer”.
- 8) 09.05.1997 » “Mouth care: A program of mouth hygiene”.
- 9) 19.05.1997 » “Self-adhesive painkiller and haemostatic drug”.
- 10) 28.05.1997 » “When there is cancer in the family”.
- 11) 11.06.1997 » “Eating habits and cancer”.
- 12) 22.11.1997 » “Contribution of restorative surgery to the confrontation of neoplasms (restoration after mastectomy, skin, head and neck neoplasms)”.
- 13) 17.12.1997 » “Presentation of cosmetics to our society”.
- 14) 29.05.1998 » “Breast cancer”.
- 15) 29.03.1999 » “Cooperation between volunteers and medical departments in cancer patients’ wards”.
- 16) 03.11.1999 » “Psycho-social problems of the cancer patient and how they can be managed”.
- 17) 12.02.2000 » “The psychological power of the patients and how it can be utilised (“Cancer in 2000”)”.

- 18) 06.03.2000 Topic “Hope”.
- 19) 29.03.2000 » “The Orthodox Mission abroad for the children of India”.
- 20) 22.05.2000 » “The influence of prayer on the treatment of the disease”.

The lectures of our Society continue regularly.



*Photo: The room at 96, Agiou Dimitriou Street (1<sup>st</sup> floor), where the programmes of S.C.M.T. take place.*

CANCER  
CAN BE BEATEN  
IT IS NOT CONTAGIOUS

The stages that a cancer patient goes through:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Acceptance

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## S.C.M.T. LECTURES

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During the operation of our Society (since 1991), the Society participates in various lectures with the sole purpose to inform the public on cancer and its prevention. These activities take place in cooperation with mass media and speakers-members of our Society at hospital wards, at the Aristotle University, at public services, societies etc., as well as during scientific conventions in which our Society takes part.

- |     |            |       |  |
|-----|------------|-------|--|
| 1)  | 30.01.1991 | Topic | “The stages of a cancer patient: denial - anger - bargaining - acceptance”.              |
| 2)  | 08.11.1991 | »     | “A hostel - Groups of psychological support for cancer patients”.                        |
| 3)  | 20.02.1992 | »     | “Familiarise yourself with the cancer patient”.  |
| 4)  | 02.03.1992 | »     | “Presentation of the pamphlet about children’s cancer”.                                  |
| 5)  | 17.04.1992 | »     | “Truth hurts, lying kills”.  |
| 6)  | 23.09.1992 | »     | “Love and information for quality of life”.  |
| 7)  | 13.10.1992 | »     | “A hostel – Transportation of people with special needs and creation of parking spaces”. |
| 8)  | 23.11.1992 | »     | “Together we shall overcome the fear of cancer”.   |
| 9)  | 11.05.1993 | »     | “Cancer: another point of view”.   |
| 10) | 01.06.1993 | »     | “Give life to your time”.  |
| 11) | 06.08.1993 | »     | “Lung cancer (smoking)”.   |
| 12) | 18.09.1993 | »     | “It is better to prevent than to cure”.  |
| 13) | 02.12.1993 | »     | “Notification of the Hague declaration (1991) concerning the cancer patient’s rights”.   |
| 14) | 23.01.1994 | »     | “The patient, the centre of our attention”.  |
| 15) | 15.05.1994 | »     | “My cancer is my hobby”.   |
| 16) | 01.06.1994 | »     | “Smoking in an already aggravated environment”.  |
| 17) | 01.09.1994 | »     | “Living with cancer”.  |
| 18) | 16.09.1994 | »     | “Truth is like a remedy and has its own formula”.  |
| 19) | 01.10.1994 | »     | “The cancer patient and the role of the family”.   |
| 20) | 10.01.1995 | »     | “My cancer and I”.   |
| 21) | 10.05.1995 | »     | “Comforting medicine”.   |

- |     |            |       |   |
|-----|------------|-------|---|
| 22) | 25.11.1995 | Topic | “Cancer and social carcinomas”.   |
| 23) | 23.01.1996 | »     | “The position of the cancer patient in contemporary society”.   |
| 24) | 29.03.1996 | »     | “The role of the volunteers-cancer patients in the care of patients with cancer”.                                     |
| 25) | 17.04.1996 | »     | “A message of life”.  |
| 26) | 23.11.1996 | »     | “1. Smoking and harmful consequences, 2. Information about cancer and its prevention, 3. Professional Consciousness”. |
| 27) | 14.01.1997 | »     | “Relationships between doctors-patients in oncology”.   |
| 28) | 26.03.1997 | »     | “Breast cancer”.  |
| 29) | 09.04.1997 | »     | “Uterus cancer”.  |
| 30) | 26.05.1997 | »     | “Paediatric Oncology”.  |
| 31) | 29.09.1997 | »     | “Cancer’s journey”.   |
| 32) | 08.10.1997 | »     | “When someone in the family has cancer”.  |
| 33) | 15.12.1997 | »     | “The patient’s need for versatile medical care”.  |

The lectures of our Society continue regularly.



*Photo: AHEPA amphitheatre - a lecture to medical students.*

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## PUBLICATIONS OF S.C.M.T.

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S.C.M.T., in its effort to make the public aware of how valuable and useful the information - prevention of cancer is, has developed an important publishing activity since 1993.

It is a series of publications consisting of fifty (50) informative pamphlets, forty two (42) of which have been diligently translated from similar publications of the National Cancer Institute of the United States of America (N.C.I.). The remaining eight (8) have been written by Society members and undertaken by volunteers and friends.

These pamphlets, which are distributed for free, offer the reader useful information about each kind of cancer, as well as valuable general instructions and advice.

Below, one can find the titles of the pamphlets in a chronological order, according to their publication by the Society of Cancer- Patients of Macedonia-Thrace since 1993.

### **Titles of pamphlets:**

1. "Discussing cancer with a child".
2. "Post-operative exercises for women with mastectomy".
3. "A guide for self-nursing after a lung operation".
4. "I quit smoking", (*Information and useful advice on how to quit smoking*).
5. "Chemotherapy and you" (*Four steps for helping patients*).
6. "What you should know about skin cancer".
7. "What you should know about bone cancer".
8. "What you should know about uterus cancer".
9. "What you should know about moles and deformed moles".
10. "What you should know about Hodgkin lymphomas".
11. "What you should know about mouth cancer".
12. "What you should know about Hodgkin's disease".
13. "What you should know about myelomatosis".
14. "What you should know about testicles cancer".
15. "What you should know about melanoma".
16. "What you should know about brain cancer".
17. "What you should know about prostate cancer".
18. "What you should know about intestine cancer".
19. "Immunity system – How it works".
20. "When someone in the family has cancer".
21. "Give life time" (*Psychological support for cancer-patients and their families*).
22. "Advice on the eating habits of cancer-patients".

23. "When cancer recurs. A new challenge".
24. "Questions and answers about pain control".
25. "Chemotherapy and you" (*A self-help guide during treatment*).
26. "Radiotherapy and you" (*A self-help guide during treatment*).
27. "What you should know about stomach cancer".
28. "What you should know about leukaemia".
29. "What you should know about cervix uteri cancer".
30. "What you should know about pancreas cancer".
31. "Looking ahead" (*A guide for cancer-patients who have been cured*).
32. "What you should know about cancer".
33. "I can survive".
34. "Sexuality and cancer" (*For the male cancer-patient and his partner*).
35. "Sexuality and cancer" (*For the female cancer-patient and her partner*).
36. "A guide for bone marrow transplant. Help among friends".
37. "Answers about liver cancer".
38. "Talking to a child about death".
39. "Cancer's journey".
40. "Coping with fatigue during and after treatment".
41. "What you should know about clinic tests".
42. "What happened to you, happened to me as well".
43. "Breast anaplasty surgery. A personal choice".
44. "What you should know about larynx cancer".
45. "Cancer, so what?" (*Short stories by Society members*).
46. "Our poems" (*A collection of poems written by Society members*).
47. "I can survive" (English translation).
48. "Cancer and family".
49. "Cancer's journey" (English translation).
50. "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger".
51. "Benefactors - Donors - Grantors - Volunteers. 20 years of love, sacrifice, support".
52. "How much strength is hidden in a child" (*Short stories written by children suffering from cancer*).
53. "Medical mistakes". Enough is enough!

Yours, the President

P. Mitta



## S.C.M.T. PROPOSALS

Prot. No.: 37

Thessaloniki, 14-6-1995

To  
The Directorate of Secondary  
Education of Thessaloniki  
(Attention: Ms/Mr.....)  
44 Sappous Street  
546 27 Thessaloniki

Subject: Visits to schools of Thessaloniki

Within the scope of the activities of the Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace and in our effort to inform the public, and especially young people, about cancer prevention, we, the cancer patients, ask you, during the oncoming school year 1993-4 and on dates and hours of your convenience, to allow us to visit secondary schools and communicate our experiences in order to sensitise and inform pupils about cancer.

Specialised oncologists will be with us and they will emphasise the importance of prevention and prompt diagnosis of cancer.



Yours faithfully,  
The President,

Persephone Mitta



The Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace has created in "Theageneio" hospital a mobile kiosk, on the ninth floor and in the basement, where coffee will be offered to the relatives of cancer-patients every morning at 10:00 am.

Their dream is the completion of the hostel and the continuation of the work of the psychological support groups. The carpenter, Mr G. Bakas, the painter, Mr S. Fotopoulos and the glass maker, Mr. Christoulakis, helped this programme without being paid for their services.

Thessaloniki, 5 October 2001  
Prot. No.: 444/274

To  
His Beatitude, The Archbishop  
of Athens and All Greece  
21 Ag. Filotheis Street  
Athens

Your Beatitude,

With great respect towards you and the whole Church, we are sending the warm greetings of the seven members of the Board of the Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace (S.C.M.T.) and its 1600 members. [...]

Within the scope of our continuous efforts for the survival and the quality of life of CANCER-PATIENTS, we make bold as to ask you to help in the creation of a joint BLOOD BANK. We ask you to accept and communicate this cancer-patients' desire, which is, we believe, the desire of all patients, regardless of their disease, through the Most Reverend Metropolitan Bishops to the charitable Flock of our Church. BLOOD is a great gift to the patients who need it in order to live and it takes only 10 minutes of the time of our healthy fellow beings.

We would like to thank you and we hope that you will support our cause.

Yours sincerely,  
For the Board

The President  
Mitta Persephone



The Secretary General  
Deliopoulou Eleni



### **The Library of 'Theageneio' Anti-Cancer Hospital is being inaugurated tomorrow**

The Administrative Board of the Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia - Thrace, within the scope of its six-year informative and preventive activities, is inaugurating in the anti-cancer hospital "Theageneio" its mobile library, which has been kindly granted to the Society by the hospital's administration. The inauguration ceremony will be held tomorrow at 12 p.m. at the ground floor of the hospital. During the inauguration ceremony, two televisions will be granted to the hospital –to the amusement of the patients of "Theageneio". One television is offered by the Society and the other by SONY agency.



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## TEN SMALL PIECES OF ADVICE

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1. Do you want to live? Quit smoking and start a happy life. Because:
2. It is better to prevent than to cure.
3. Love and information give quality of life.
4. Truth hurts but lying kills. Since:
5. Who can be a better judge for myself than me?
6. Believe in life, it is the best medicine.
7. Live “today”, forget “yesterday”, “tomorrow” is waiting for you.
8. What is worthwhile in life is to fight, either we win or not. Victory is every battle we give in life.
9. I want to help you, give me the chance.
10. Together we shall overcome the fear of cancer, you are not alone.

*Persephone Mitta*

*9.10.1991*



*Drawing by:  
Triantafyllia Mitta*

*Why do they smoke and they don't ask me first?*

*Why do they kill me since they love me?*

*Persephone Mitta*

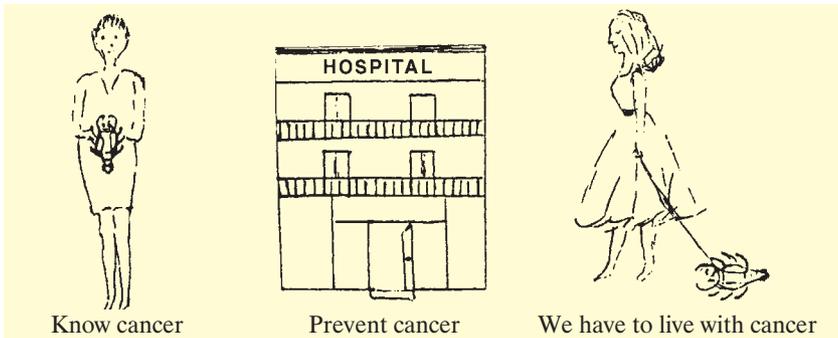
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## YOU CAN DO IT

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- Don't smoke, don't drink alcohol.  
You can do it.
- Don't have stress.  
You can do it.
- Work. Because working is health.  
You can do it.
- Be glad for each day you live.  
You can do it.
- Have a check-up once a year, a medical and a dental one.  
You can do it.
- All women should perform a breast self-examination once a month and have a regular PAP test.  
You can do it.
- Watch your eating habits.  
You can do it.
- Follow a low-fat diet.  
You can do it.
- Help our struggle against cancer. It concerns all of us.  
You can do it.

*Persephone Mitta, 31.5.1991*



- P. Mitta, 31.5.2000*
- February 4: International day against cancer
  - April 7: International day of health
  - May 12-16: A week against melanoma
  - May 31: A day against smoking
  - June 4: International day for those who survived cancer
  - October: Month against breast cancer
  - October 16: Nutrition day
  - October 17: International day of pain
  - December 3: A day for the people with special needs
  - December 5: International day of volunteering

Remember,  
truth hurts,  
but lying kills.

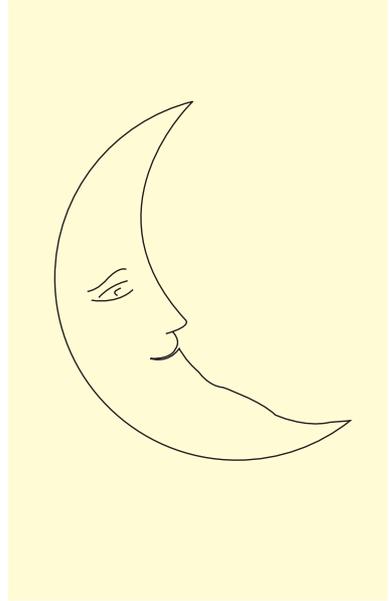
*Persephone Mitta*  
30.12.1990

Cancer is a disease  
like all the others.  
In order to defeat it,  
you have to underestimate it first.

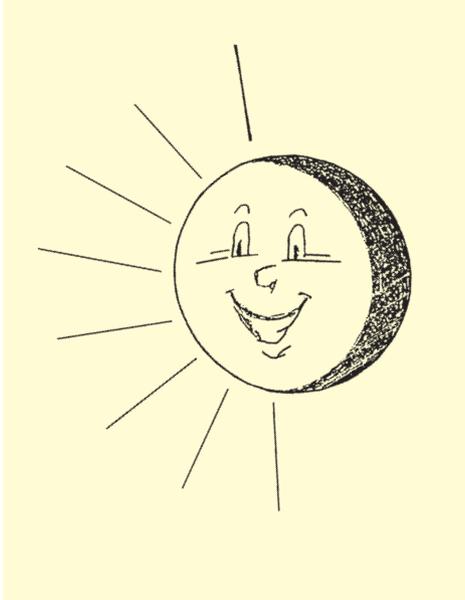
*Souzana Papadopoulou*  
1998

Give: NO  
time to life,  
but  
life to time

*Achilles Tourkantonis*  
Professor of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



*Photo: The first young woman from the members of the Society of Cancer-Patients who got married and created a family.*



...My cancer?

I have it as a HOBBY...

*V. Antoniadou*

1995

I am looking at the sun  
and I live for today

I can see the moon  
and I hope for tomorrow.

*Persephone Mitta*

1998

...Eyes wet,  
heart in pieces,

hot and cold,

goodbye disease...

1993

*Climbe Georgia*

13 years old



**Photo:** *The first young man  
from the members of the Society  
of Cancer-Patients who got married  
and created a family.*

## A person's soul

I am asking the moon and the stars  
the sun that shines to tell me:  
“how closed a person's soul is and  
how difficult it is for anyone to enter”.

I only asked to help,  
I received lots of anger.  
It is easy to destroy  
it is much more difficult to build.

It is our job to love  
both to us to be willing.  
Our focal point is the patient  
you in front and I am following

*Persephone Mitta, 1996*

## Hope

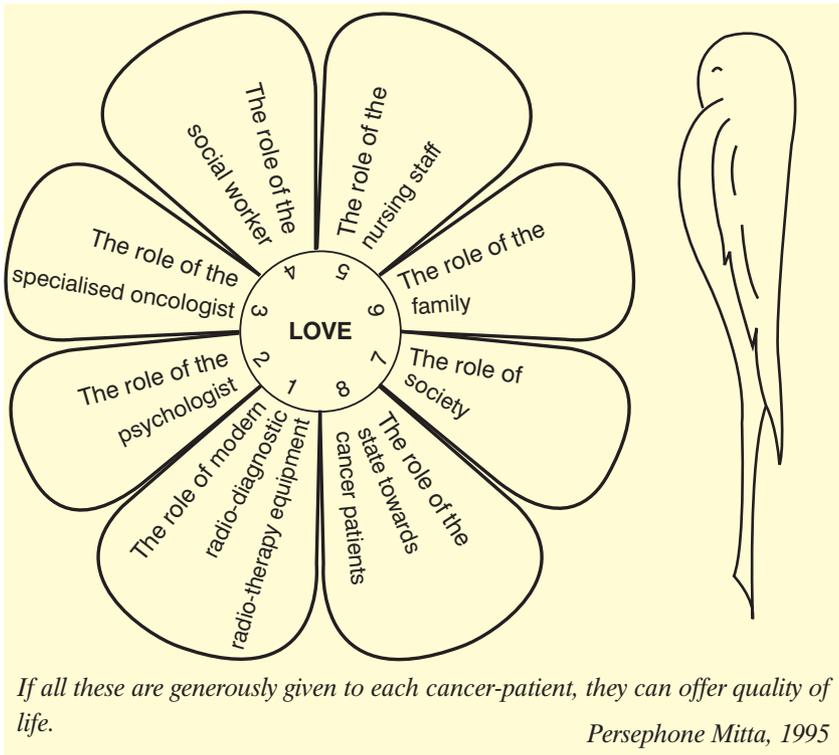
Professional consciousness,  
a school lesson:  
a better future  
this is what society wants.

*Persephone Mitta, 1992*

## Disappointment

Your eyes are as white as a sheet  
your eyebrows plucked,  
water comes out of your mouth  
I stoop to drink and it is blood.

*Persephone Mitta, 1998*





I can see through Your eyes,  
I can hear through Your ears,  
follow your own path  
and you will find me in front of you.

*Persephone Mitta*  
1989

Through this disease I got to know death. I realised, though, what LIFE is all about. I experienced hell; I realised, though, what paradise is all about. I lost myself; I understood myself, though, so well as never before...

I was destroyed externally; however, I think I was moulded spiritually. I lived through a real misfortune. But now, I know how to recognise real Happiness.

*Dina Gouliova*  
1994

I open my eyes and I can see You,  
You who always shed Love.  
I close my eyes and I can feel You,  
You, dear Lord, who look at everything.

I open my heart and I place You,  
You who Truly Love me.  
I open my soul and I can feel You,  
and I can listen to the birds singing again.

*Stella Galani*  
29.9.1997

*“...Thessaloniki,  
the greatest among cities...”*

You are a noble lady  
and all your children  
have become a crown  
right this moment.

One decorates the hair,  
the other your neck,  
they gave light and brightened up  
your palace, lady.

You are beautiful  
and even more graceful,  
Goddess of Balkans  
the moon, the sun.

Your lights have spread  
to Europe and even further,  
to all the world,  
my most beautiful on earth.

Looking at you I felt  
great excitement,  
my little Thessaloniki,  
a great city of many.

*Persephone Mitta  
Thessaloniki 1.1.1997*

## Loneliness

Narrow cell of loneliness,  
my heart, stop being in distress  
- in the cell of loneliness.

The hands strike the prison bars  
and I am short of air  
- narrow cell of loneliness.

My heart, you are full of wounds,  
my tears wash them away,  
the chains around me  
weigh my body down.

My heart, I listen carefully  
you can breathe  
the bars are bleeding  
but you still persist.

My heart, look at what your flowing  
blood wrote down:  
“I am with you, don’t be in distress,”  
- narrow cell of loneliness...

*Persephone Mitta  
Thessaloniki, 31.07.1988*



*Drawing: Triantafyllia Mita*

## AN ASSOCIATION

My friends, I would like to talk to you about something beautiful,  
listen to me, I promise I shall not keep you long.  
At number 46 of Agias Sofias Street  
I can see some ladies gathering, a few times a week.  
All of them are “unfortunate”, or so the people say,  
because they have felt deep inside the feeling of pain.  
So these women found a nice association,  
whose intentions you once know, you will not have any objection.  
My friends, our goal is to support one another  
so that none gives in, when hard times come.  
When we see a sick person, we help willingly  
so that tears become laughter permanently.  
We stand by every cancer patient  
to share the pain and comfort in hard times.  
And when we get good news from tests  
all of us, as a company, are delighted.  
Come close, my friends, to see something beautiful,  
to give help and be helped.  
I’m telling you, when you give love, you feel like a god.  
It’s beautiful, I swear, it’s sacred  
to see the patient’s eyes moist with tears,  
the lips trembling, the mouth dry saying:  
“My child, I wish you all the best”.  
My friend, we wouldn’t like to hear you saying  
“look at the poor lady; she’s condemned by her sickness and doctors”.  
No, that is not the way we feel, we are saying that for real,  
we have our own dreams and we want to enjoy  
all these things in life, which is really beautiful,  
and we hope God helps us  
be happy...

*Evdoxia Sakaridou-Ginou*  
1993

## “Letter to Santa Claus”

### A'. Pain

Dear Santa Claus,  
that you are high above,  
just listen to us,  
listen to us for a while.

People have ears  
but they don't listen to us,  
they have eyes,  
but they are shut, they can't see.

We have asked for a room  
and they won't give it to us,  
with special staff,  
humane conditions.

We have said it orally,  
we have said it in writing,  
we have said it on TV,  
we have informed the press.

We have been given a promise  
upon recommendations,  
in a basement, a little corner  
to give us shelter.

This place has been completed  
a great joy for all of us,  
a castle in the air fell apart  
and our joy vanished.

We haven't asked for a suite  
or to leave abroad.  
Just a spacious room  
to endure our pain.

The members of Parliament know it  
even the Minister himself  
the ones who set people up know it  
everyone in the same country.

No one has been moved  
by so many rallies,  
no one felt that  
they owed us an answer.

Someone with ears  
and eyes  
is welcome to come one morning  
and visit AHEPA hospital.

In a corridor  
after an emergency  
the cancer patient is sitting  
in such cold.

After having a rough time  
the whole night  
travelling to come,  
she is thinking about the return trip.

Everything was complete in time,  
even the courtyard,  
the patient as the focal point  
has still a long way to go.

Dear Santa Claus,  
that you are high above,  
just listen to us,  
listen to us just for now...

*Persephone Mitta  
Thessaloniki, 30.12.1996*

## **“Letter to Santa Claus”**

### **B'. Anxiety**

Dear Santa Claus, that you are high above,  
if you listen to us, many things will change.

There is no room for hospitalisation,  
no proper equipment for treatment.

Cobalt bombs have broken down  
and we have only listened to idle words since yesterday.

There is no tomorrow, there is no infrastructure,  
we have stuck to the past, which has already gone.

The linear accelerator is the only one,  
but it has broken down in Macedonia.

The patients are yelling, they have many complaints,  
cancer is innocent considering all these.

In other countries they get rid of them within a decade,  
however, we preserve them here and they look like museums.

This is our plight –and just think–  
“Papageorgiou” hospital has been completed without opening its doors  
to the public.

It has new equipment, locked,  
we and hope die slowly day by day.

What we can say to our children, I’ve been thinking,  
when they are in pain, we won’t be able to listen.

They have placed their orders, we’ve been told, but the date of their  
arrival is unknown,  
no one says anything and the responsible ones remain uninvolved.

We don’t have any quality of life, and this remains to be told,  
we only live out of God’s will.

*Persephone Mitta  
Thessaloniki, 30.12.1997*

## “Letter to Santa Claus”

C'. Fear

Dear Santa Claus,  
that you are high above,  
we ask for your help  
once again.

The domain of cancer  
is very cruel,  
but when there is love,  
we manage to scrape along somehow.

We are cancer patients,  
no one hides it anymore,  
our only wish is that  
we become fewer and fewer.

We live in pain,  
mutilations,  
chemotherapies,  
in hard times.

Everyone does everything,  
it's so scary if you think about it,  
everyone knows everything  
whenever I need them.

The word “speciality”  
is what we demand today,  
we want quality  
in our future.

We demand doctors  
who are very good, specialised  
we demand doctors  
who are patient, organised.

To hold consultations  
all together,  
to decide jointly  
what the proper action is.

To communicate their decisions to me,  
to inform me,  
to let me decide along with them  
– this is what I ask.

We ask for love  
from the nursing staff,  
we ask the doctor  
to tell us the truth.

S/he will tell us tactfully,  
as if we were  
her/his father or brother,  
child or relative.

We want psychologists,  
physiotherapists,  
to have the best  
out of cancer.

If we arrive one day  
at these results,  
we won't be needed  
here any more.

In cancer land  
it's not the pain that sustains us,  
love and truth  
are the only laws.

*Persephone Mitta  
Thessaloniki, 1.1.2002*

## “Letter to Santa Claus” D’. Appeal

Dear Santa Claus,  
that you are high above,  
help to construct  
a hospital  
only for children.

For all diseases  
and not separately,  
to play, to be in pain,  
to get well.

To have waiting-rooms,  
amusement rooms,  
school for lessons,  
recreation rooms.

Athens has got three,  
but it’s far away.  
Macedonia-Thrace:  
no quality.

It’s a long distance  
for a child  
to travel to Athens  
for hospitalisation.

Dear Santa Claus,  
that you can see us from above,  
help our children,  
so that everyone  
lives happily ever after.

*Persephone Mitta  
Thessaloniki, 5.1.2005*



*The signatures for the projects in the pictures were put in the beginning of 2007, with the promise that they will be completed in four years' time.*



*While the hostel for cancer patients at Paiania, Attica, was completed many years ago, it still remains closed, and the Hellenic Anti-Cancer Association wants to use it as a research-rehabilitation centre, despite the fact that cancer patients literally die in the street.*



*The hostel for cancer patients at Pylaia, Thessaloniki, has been completed after twenty years' waiting. The Anti-cancer Association wants to use it as a rehabilitation-full recovery centre and not for its original purpose.*



*The hostel for children cancer patients, built by the Late Metropolitan Panteleimon and inaugurated by the Late Archbishop Christodoulos, has operated for years as a hostel for Theology students upon the approval of Metropolitan Anthimos.*

## THE FOUNDING MEMBERS

### NAME

### SIGNATURE

- 1) Persephone Mitta
- 2) Maria Papachristou
- 3) Constantinos Mourikis
- 4) Eleftheria Tsilimantou-Kounava
- 5) Maria Kalaouzi-Kotini
- 6) Fotios Vairlis
- 7) Prokopios Anthomelidis
- 8) Aphrodite Peristeraki
- 9) Cornelia Sfintidou
- 10) Timon Saklampanis
- 11) Stella Nasti
- 12) Ignatios Theofanidis
- 13) Melpomeni Dimitriou
- 14) Despoina Tartora
- 15) Thomas Koutsimparis
- 16) Savvas Chatzigeorgiadis
- 17) Panagiotis Patoumas
- 18) Loukas Fokas
- 19) Andreas Agas
- 20) Orestis Ioannidis

Dr Vritsios  
 Professor of  
 Radio-Therapy  
 Oncology, A.U.TH.  
 Honorary President  
 of the Society  
 S.C.M.T.

Thessaloniki 24/12/1991



### THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SOCIETY OF CANCER-PATIENTS OF MACEDONIA-THRACE

The administrative board of the society of cancer-patients of Macedonia-Thrace, after the elections held on 19 February, formed itself as a body as follows: President Mitta Persephone, Vice President Vasileios Grigoriadis, secretary general Maria Petridou, Treasurer Ioannis Saridakis, Counsellors Andreas Agas, Annetta Matakou and Vassiliki Antoniadou. Surrogate members: Maria Mantzirtzi, Anthoula Andreadou and Maria Partheni.

### LEGAL RECOGNITION OF OUR SOCIETY

By the decision No. 76/1993 of the large court of first instance of Thessaloniki (process of voluntary jurisdiction), the establishment of a non-profit society, under the name "Society of Cancer-Patients of Macedonia-Thrace", based in Thessaloniki, was recognised, and its Charter, dated 24-12-1991 and consisting of 41 articles, was approved.

The objective of the Society is mutual aid and the cultivation of a spirit of friendship and love among its members, the psychological support of those who will be under treatment, the cooperation with specialists and the information of the public regarding ways of helping cancer patients.

The proxy lawyer  
 LYSANDROS ALEXIADIS

THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF THE SOCIETY  
OF CANCER PATIENTS OF MACEDONIA-THRACE  
CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. PRESIDENT : MITTA PERSEPHONE
2. VICE-PRESIDENT : DALAKAS KONSTANTINOS
3. SECRETARY : TSIKALA KATINA
4. TREASURER : NIKIFORIDIS EMMANOUEL
5. MEMBER : TSOLOU ELENI
6. MEMBER : PAPASTERGIADOU KALLIOPI
7. MEMBER : MATAKOU ANETA

*Thessaloniki, 14-3-2010*



I would like to thank all those who helped me.  
I would also like to thank all those who did not help me,  
because they made me become a better person.

*Persephone Mitta  
2000*

