

EDITORIAL

Thesis - hunters in Greece: The end of a bloody black period for Greek Medicine

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The PhD Thesis has been a painful topic for thousands of medical doctors in Greece. Generally, it may represent a dream of life, a step for an academically oriented career, a tool to improve a CV, or an organised program in order to experience actively the medical research. It may also be an extra qualification for finding a job, since the medical degree is almost useless in countries with too many medical graduates, including Greece. All the above described, were impossible for an enormous number of medical doctors in Greece, during the past decade (and before that period, also). The reason is that in order to become a PhD student one should have been involved in regional corporate elites, irrelevantly from his qualifications and his CV.

At the duration of a doctor's career, the acquaintances are a dynamic and evolving situation, thus we have seen the phenomenon that some doctors in advanced age managed eventually to start and finish successfully a PhD Thesis, because in that age they had accomplished the mission to find help from some professor. Of course, entrusting someone with a doctoral thesis, had the character of transaction, since often persons who had managed to make a thesis had with some way served a professor. Don't you imagine that they had offered money, or they had sold a parcel to the professors in half from its real price. The means were secret and such secrets will never be revealed in a ground-breaking way. PhD Thesis was the first step from a dark process of transaction, and only a few people outside the elites know how many corresponding steps existed, that led a person upwards.

The last years, dramatic changes have transformed radically the landscape for the candidate doctors, because numerous postgraduate programs have been established, that are delimited by official legislative documents, and in some way they "protect" the PhD students. Today Greece is "stuffed" with an incredible number of PhD students, this of course does not mean that all these candidates will finish some day their Thesis. On the contrary, if some official statistical data were available to the public, it would be known that the proportion of the candidates who successfully finish their doctorate is small. In fact, it is suspectly small. We see therefore that the present situation is ostensibly better concerning the past but once again the postgraduate programs do not promote the production of PhD doctors, since the celebrating of starting a Thesis one day is interrupted.

Obstacles in finishing the PhD thesis

From the moment the three-member mentoring committee is fixed, the composition of committee may also mean the end of Thesis. That is to say, it has been reported, within expected secrecy, that one or more from the members of committee not only do not support and guide the candidate but can permanently prevent him/her in each distinguishable phase of the Thesis preparation period. Because of these obstacles, a lot of candidate doctors abandon willingly their effort or delay so much that due to the University regulations they lose the right to continue, in the end. This phenomenon does not come from the evil instincts of the mentoring committee members, but is genuine indifference combined with lack of qualifications for mentorship. Mentorship is not an easy task for the academic staff. However, we see that several of them are mentoring more than 10-15 candidates simultaneously. This of course leads to a "Titanic Scenario", but interestingly no one is bothered by this massive workload of the mentor, who continues the same "model of mentorship" for many consequent years, without any problem/control. Is this a random misfortune, a kind of negligence, or a planned in advance crime? Somebodies of the 20 candidates finish successfully the doctoral thesis, who from all finish however? Are they the "privileged of the past"? Is this period the same bloody black period dressed in white?

Funding for the doctoral thesis; Then and now

As it was previously reported, a minimal proportion of medical graduates completed the PhD Thesis in the past. They usually were self-sponsored or family-sponsored researchers who could pay for the expenses needed for their doctoral thesis. Without organized facilities of research, and while having to pay for each one of the people involved in the PhD process, things were difficult to work out. A lot of fortunes were wasted in foolish experiments, by candidates who were struggling with themselves to acquire some data and conclusions. Lack of mentorship was a problem of the past and of present. Funding for research was not enough in the past, and is not enough currently, too. With such a large number of candidate doctors that is rapidly growing, research financing will certainly be not sufficient in the following years, too. If combined with lack of mentorship, funding may be enough reason for the PhD Thesis failure. However, if we should choose between the two factors, mentorship is more