

## Editor's Page

# Cardiovascular Disease and Medical Technology: Essential Needs and Realities

PANOS E. VARDAS

*Department of Cardiology, Heraklion University Hospital, Crete, Greece  
Past-President, ESC*



**D**uring the last fifty years, cardiovascular medicine has been fortunate enough to undergo impressive development and has produced tangible and dependable results that enhance the diagnosis and treatment of patients. Of course, this impressive development has involved not only drugs, but more importantly the techniques and products of biotechnology. Pacemakers, catheters, electrodes, artificial heart valves, stents, and defibrillators are some outstanding achievements of our era, all of which have contributed significantly to the treatment of patients, while in many cases they have offered a complete cure. Complete atrioventricular block, for example, is fully corrected by an atrioventricular pacemaker.

It is curious, therefore, that our political leaders have rarely paid attention to the special training and the work that is required for the application and long-term follow up of these devices. The health care system has need of capable specialists who can offer the patient an excellent outcome, while costing the state as little as possible. Is that possible, though, based on principles of good management?

The professional associations to which special-

ised cardiologists belong have the right and the duty to raise these paramount issues and topics for discussion, as the basis of an open and honest dialogue. In such a dialogue, the need for specialist training and the cost of monitoring the devices would inevitably take centre stage. At the same time, the importance of the work of specialised interventional cardiologists and electrophysiologists, and the need for special compensation, should also be taken into consideration.

It is sad that our political leaders avoid honest dialogue aimed at transparency and facing up to the realities. I believe that our political leaders have their heads buried in the sand.

Today, under the most stringent financial strictures, health care systems are asking for highly trained specialists in fields of current and evolving technology, who are willing to take responsibility for thousands of patients in return for a uniform minimum monthly wage, corresponding to a bare minimum standard of living. Is this really acceptable and feasible?

It is up to those who determine what is honest, ethical, and truthful to reply ...