

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE-AUGUST 2022

6th Edition

## Director's Message

*Dear Colleagues and Stakeholders,*



the biobank.cy Center of Excellence is continuing its way to success while facing all the challenges regarding its multifaceted objectives.

Important activities during the past three months were as follows:

-On June 2-3 we had an activity with educational and research components regarding the ethical, legal, and social implications of the Biobank operation. Members of the BBMRI-ERIC ELSI team visited us from Graz, Italy and Spain for a special interacting risk mapping workshop and preparation of a manuscript relating to biobanking challenges. Most of the personnel from our Center, including nurses, technologists, and senior staff, participated in the workshop.

-New initiative in our effort to expand our diagnostic repertoire in serving the Cypriot patient. On June 24, we had a meeting with the Minister of Health, Mr Michael Hadjipantelas, in the presence of Dr Carolina Stylianou, Superintendent of Clinical Laboratories at the Ministry of Health (MoH), upon the initiative of the member of biobank.cy Council, Her Excellency Ambassador of Austria Dorothea Auer. With the support and escort of the President of the Council, Mrs Elena Tanou, the Operations Manager Mrs Marina Constantinou, the Project Manager Dr Mariel Voutounou and the Director Prof. C. Deltas. By visiting the Minister, we aimed to promote the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the biobank.cy and the MoH for the purchase of tertiary molecular genetic services offered by the Center. This emanates as an obligation of the MoH as it was specifically described in a Letter of Commitment for Support which was provided on submission of the CY-Biobank proposal to the EU, back in November 2018. The Minister of Health was positive in promoting this agreement and asked Prof. Deltas to prepare a draft MoU. Prof. Deltas prepared and submitted a draft MoU a few days after this meeting.

-During the third week of August we had 3 summer students who had the opportunity to participate in the summer academy of the University of Cyprus, during which our Center delivered lectures and touring of the Biobanking facilities, explaining to young undergrads and high school students what Biobank all is about and what research is in progress. The students found it all very rewarding and enthusiastic.

-On August 4-5 STEAM for Peace and Entrepreneurship Camp took place in the historical Ledra Palace Hotel in the Buffer Zone in Nicosia. The camp is designed with the theme of peace to introduce friendship, collaboration and peacebuilding. Dr Charalambos Stefanou (RnD Manager), Ms Maria Kyratzi (Biobank Manager), Dr Esther Ghanem (Visiting Researcher) and Mr Pavlos Ioannou (PhD Candidate) represented biobank.cy Center of Excellence. Our team joined a dynamic group of Cypriot STEAM scientists and contributed to hands-on STEAM experiments designed for middle school/gymnasium bi-communal students from all over Cyprus. STEAM for Peace is sponsored by the US Embassy in Cyprus's Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF).

-We spent the past few months organizing the launching of a new biobanking activity, the Family Trios, which means two parents and one child, all adults. In doing so we prepared lay language awareness material for advertising this new action, while we are preparing to collaborate with the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard, to enroll volunteers at a specially designed designated station at the military hospital, BMH SNE 106.





Members of our team met with the Minister of Health Mr Michalis Hadjipandela, in the presence of Dr Carolina Stylianou, Superintendent of Clinical Laboratories.

The meeting, which was initiated by the President of the Center Mrs Elena Tanou, was also attended by the members Mrs Dorothea Auer, Ambassador of Austria in Cyprus, the Director Prof. Constantinos Deltas, the Operations Manager Mrs Marina Constantinou and the Project Manager Dr Mariel Voutounou.

The objective of the meeting was to inform the Minister about the work of the Center and the Biobank and to submit suggestions for the utilization of the medical infrastructure created with European and National funding.

(Ελληνικά)

## Workshop on Risk Mapping at biobank.cy Centre of Excellence

Members of the BBMRI-ERIC ELSI team, Michaela Th. Mayrhofer, Kaya Akyuz, Melanie Goisauf, Sara Casati, and Gillian Martin, visited our Centre in June 2022.

The ELSI experts worked together with the biobank.cy team on biobanking risk identification and mapping. (Ελληνικά)



STEAM for Peace and Entrepreneurship Camp, designed to introduce friendship and peace-building, took place in the historical Ledra Palace Hotel in the Buffer Zone, Nicosia.

Dr Stefanou, Mrs Kyratzi, Dr Ghanem and Mr Ioannou represented biobank.cy and joined a dynamic group of Cypriot STEAM scientists contributing to hands-on STEAM experiments designed for middle school/gymnasium bi-communal students from all over Cyprus.

STEAM for Peace is sponsored by the US Embassy in Cyprus's Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund.

(Ελληνικά)





A delegation of researchers of the biobank.cy Center of Excellence visited the group of Professor Stan Knock at the Charles University in Prague. The two teams have a lot in common but most importantly they are excelling in their pursuit for better diagnosis and treatment of patients with inherited kidney disorders, in collaboration with the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard in Boston, USA. Our team also visited BIOCEV, a joint project of six institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and two faculties of Charles University in Prague. [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



Dr Mariel Voutounou, Project Manager of biobank.cy Centre of Excellence, presented the work and actions of the Biobank at the event hosted by the Biological Society Cyprus and held at Shakolas Educational Centre for Clinical Medicine.

Dr Voutounou's presentation was entitled "Biobank and Next Generation Biomedical Research in Cyprus". [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)

University of Cyprus welcomed its new students to an informative event concerning both the programs of study and the services of the University.

Members of our team were there and presented the work and actions of biobank.cy Center of Excellence.

[\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



"Participation in any scientific research is an act of altruism that should aim for the good of society," Prof. Deltas stated in an interview to "Welcome" magazine of Hermes Airports

The Summer 2022 issue is distributed within Larnaka and Pafos Airports.

[\(Ελληνικά\)](#)

In a full-length interview on Reporter, Prof. Deltas talked about the contribution of biobank.cy to the community and the medical world, as well as the future of biobank which, as he characteristically states, "is a bank which does not receive money as interest but better diagnosis, prevention and treatment". [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)





Prof. h.c. Karine Sargsyan, MD, Managing Director, International Biobanking and Education, Medical University of Graz, visited biobank.cy.

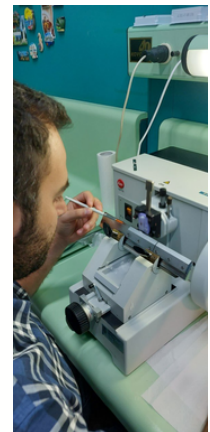
During her visit, Prof. Sargsyan met with the Director of the Center, Prof. Constantinos Deltas, the management team of the individual departments and members of the scientific staff and gave a lecture entitled 'Innovation in biobanking'.

Such contacts and exchanges with experts on issues of operation of contemporary Biobanks, help the Biobank of the University of Cyprus to remain on the right path to maintain excellence in terms of the quality of its activities.

[\(Ελληνικά\)](#)

Dr Christoforos Odiatis and PhD candidate Pavlos Ioannou from biobank.cy visited Croatia and attended a training that was performed by our collaborators, Prof. Danica Galešić Ljubanović's team, in Dubrava University Hospital, Department of Pathology in Zagreb.

The training was about tissue processing for histology. [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



Our team's visit to Agios Maronas Primary School in Nicosia was crowned with success.

Professor Constantinos Deltas presented to the adult audience the goals of our Center and the value of voluntary participation in our research concerning the DNA mapping of Cypriots.

At the same time, members of our scientific team organized an interactive workshop for the students. The success of the biobank.cy project depends on the voluntary participation of Cypriot citizens from all communities. [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



Dr Christoforos Odiatis and PhD candidate Pavlos Ioannou from biobank.cy participated in the 23rd Panhellenic Congress of Nephrology that was held in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Dr Odiatis' presentation was entitled "Preclinical studies on Alport Syndrome mice treated with chemical chaperons". ([Ελληνικά](#)).



The biobank.cy Center of Excellence at the highest peak of Africa.

Dr Charalambos Stefanou, RnD Manager at biobank.cy, with the flag of our Center in his hands, successfully climbed the highest mountain peak of Africa, Kilimanjaro.

The ascent of Dr Stefanou lasted six days with the temperature reaching -15°C. ([Ελληνικά](#)).

Under the title "The Cypriot Biobank and the DNA of Cypriots", Professor Constantinos Deltas gave a lecture at the Cultural and Conference Center (Laurentiou House) in Kalopanayiotis.

Special thanks to the Community Leader Mr. Lambros Lambrou and the Community Council for the hospitality. ([Ελληνικά](#)).



The Lead Scientist & Group Leader of Biobank, Dr Gregory Papagregoriou, was hosted on the Nicosia Municipality Podcasts. Dr Papagregoriou talked, among other things, about the Biobank's research projects and "Family Trios", an action currently inaugurated. [Listen here.](#) ([Ελληνικά](#)).

Prof. Deltas, promoting Biobank and the newly established action "Family Trios", gave an interview to the newspaper "The Press of the Maronites". Read the [interview here](#), pg. 22. ([Ελληνικά](#)).



For the very interesting interview given by Prof. Constantinos Deltas to journalist George Pavlides and Kanali 6 click [this link](#). ([Ελληνικά](#)).





## Students' Testimonials

Our Center has recently hosted students from Universities and high-schools. Our goal was to increase their awareness on biobanking, give them a hands-on experience in our labs and promote interaction with our researchers.

"The internship opportunity offered by biobank.cy was a very positive, eye-opening, and inspirational experience for me.

As a student I have gained field experience and strengthened my communication and practical skills through the shadowing and operation of various of laboratory techniques and through the continuous interaction with laboratory personnel working in different departments of the biobank.cy Center of Excellence.

If you are a student interested in the field of biosciences, I would really recommend it!"

*Marilia Pai*  
3rd Year Biochemistry  
University of Leeds

"The experience I gained by watching and helping the scientists working in the Biobank of Cyprus was nothing less than eye opening.

The main reason for this was that I was able to witness many different branches of biochemistry, for example from learning about real-time PCR to learning about the importance of animal testing.

My experience was very important as it gave me the chance to learn new information about the study field I will join as a university student later on.

I believe this experience is invaluable and I wholeheartedly recommend it!"

*Elias Lambri, Student*

"I was given the opportunity to visit biobank.cy for one week and lucky enough to be accompanied by numerous scientists who answered my questions and presented a series of fascinating and interactive workshops.

Prof. Constantinos Deltas welcomed us with a presentation and the most magnificent thing was when he emphasized on how a biobank works and that he pointed out that 'without research there is no progress'. It was really exciting and useful to hear him explaining all these. As students we ought to decide about our academic studies and our future job.

Dr Maria Spiliotaki's speech, focused on cancer cells, gave us later on the opportunity to see in the stereoscope these cells. I was speechless because of the big difference between the normal and contaminated cells. This whole experience is unforgettable! Moreover, the experience we had with PhD candidate Pavlos Ioannou and Dr Christoforos Odiatis was very interesting. They introduced us to the experimental mouse models in science and we were able to see under a microscope all the mouse viscera. It was so unbelievable and exciting at the same time. I want to do it again for sure! Finally, medical students introduced us to their profession and that was very helpful.

To conclude, I am really grateful that the scientists of the Center were willing to answer my questions and give me advice, especially scientist Stavroula Louka. There are so many scientists I want to thank because they gave me the opportunity to join them and see them in action. Everything was remarkable!"

*Aggeliki Irakleous, Student*



Our participation in University of Cyprus' Summer Academies was successfully completed

biobank.cy Center of Excellence, as part of the Academy of Medicine and Biosciences, hosted a total of 42 students on July 6.

Prof. Constantinos Deltas welcomed the students with the presentation "Introduction to Biobanking" and then the scientists of the Center gave a series of interesting and interactive workshops, including "The DNA Lab" and the "Experimental Mouse Models in Science." [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



**Πρόσκληση για εγγραφή εθελοντών**

Το biobank.cy, Κέντρο Αριότητας για τη Βιοτράπεζα και Βιοϊατρική Έρευνα του Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου, εγκαινιάζει τη δράση **Οικογενειακές Τριάδες**.

Η βιοτράπεζα αποτελείται από συλλογές σπινών αρχών, πληροφοριών και βιολογικού υλικού με σκοπό την υποστήριξη ιατρικής έρευνας σκέψης και την μέλη του DNA των Κυπρίων.

Η επιτυχία του έργου εξαρτάται από την εθελοντική συμμετοχή των Κυπρίων πολιτών από όλες τις κοινότητες, Ελληνοκυπριακών, Τουρκοκυπριακών, Μαραντινών, Αρμενικών, Λατίνων και άλλων.

Η εθελοντική συμμετοχή στη δράση θα βοηθήσει να ενισχυθούν ιδιαίτερα χαρακτηριστικά στο DNA των Κυπρίων που ίσως να ευθύνονται για γενετικές ή άλλες ασθένειες.

Απώτερος στόχος είναι η γνώση που θα αποκτηθεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί ως εργαλείο πρόληψης και πρόγνωσης ασθενειών καθώς και στην ανάπτυξη νέων θεραπειών για τον κυπριακό πληθυσμό.

Η δράση **Οικογενειακές Τριάδες** προσφέρει την εθελοντική συμμετοχή δύο γονέων και ενός παιδιού άνω των 18 ετών. Τα κοινά γονίδια και η συμβολή στο ίδιο περιβάλλον δίνουν χρήσιμα αποτελέσματα για την υγεία της οικογένειας.

**Επενδύουμε στη Βιοτράπεζα, επενδύουμε σε μια πιο υγιή Κύπρο**

Οι εθελοντές από την επαρχία Λευκωσίας μπορούν να επισκεφθούν τις εγκαταστάσεις μας στην Ιατρική Σχολή του Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου στο Σιακόλει Εκπαιδευτικό Κέντρο Κλινικής Ιατρικής (Πίσω από το Γενικό Νοσοκομείο Λευκωσίας) ή στην Λεωφ. Κέννην 89 στη Λευκωσία.

Οι εθελοντές από τις επαρχίες Λάνακος, Αμμογιάς, Πάφου και εκτός της επαρχίας Λεμεσίου μπορούν να επικοινωνήσουν μαζί μας για διευθέτηση ραντεβού στην πόλη τους.

Αν είστε εργαζόμενος στο Υπουργείο Άμυνας ή μέλος της Εθνικής Φρουράς, μπορείτε να πραγματοποιήσετε το ραντεβού σας στους πιο πάνω χώρους ή στο Στρατιωτικό Νοσοκομείο Βίλλε 106 στη Λεμεσό.

Αν σπάζετε να γίνετε εθελοντής και να συμβάλετε στη μέλη του DNA των Κυπρίων, παρακαλούμε επικοινωνήστε με τον αριθμό 7777 1838 ή στο [biobank@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:biobank@ucy.ac.cy) ή παρατώντας τον καλέσο για την ηλεκτρονική φόρμα εκδήλωσης ενδιαφέροντος.

**Επενδύουμε στη Βιοτράπεζα, επενδύουμε σε μια πιο υγιή Κύπρο**

Our Center launched "Family Trios", a unique project that will provide the opportunity for medical studies for the benefit of the participants and the entire society.

The activity requires the participation of two parents and a child over 18 years of age. [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



#biobankcy

Το έργο CY-Biobank χρηματοδοτείται από το πρόγραμμα Έρευνας και Καινοτομίας Horizon 2020 της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, με αριθμό συμβολαίου 857122



biobank.cy, Center of Excellence for Biobanking and Biomedical Research participates in the job shadowing program of "Girls in STEAM Academy." [\(Ελληνικά\)](#)



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The CY-Biobank Consortium



This project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the University of Cyprus, under grant agreement No. 857122.

