

# PROFESSOR PETROS KOKKALIS

## CONTRIBUTION TO GREEK NEUROSURGERY

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### BIOGRAPHY

Petros S. Kokkalis was born in Levadia, in 1896. He studied medicine in the universities of Athens (1911), Berlin (1913), Zurich (1915) and Berne (1916) and was trained with distinguished surgeons (Fritz de Quervain, Theodore Kocher, Ernst Ferdinand Sauerbruch).

He returned to Athens in 1928 and was appointed Director of the Surgical Units of four Hospitals (‘Elpis’, ‘Dispensary’, ‘Evangelismos’, and ‘Aretaieion’).

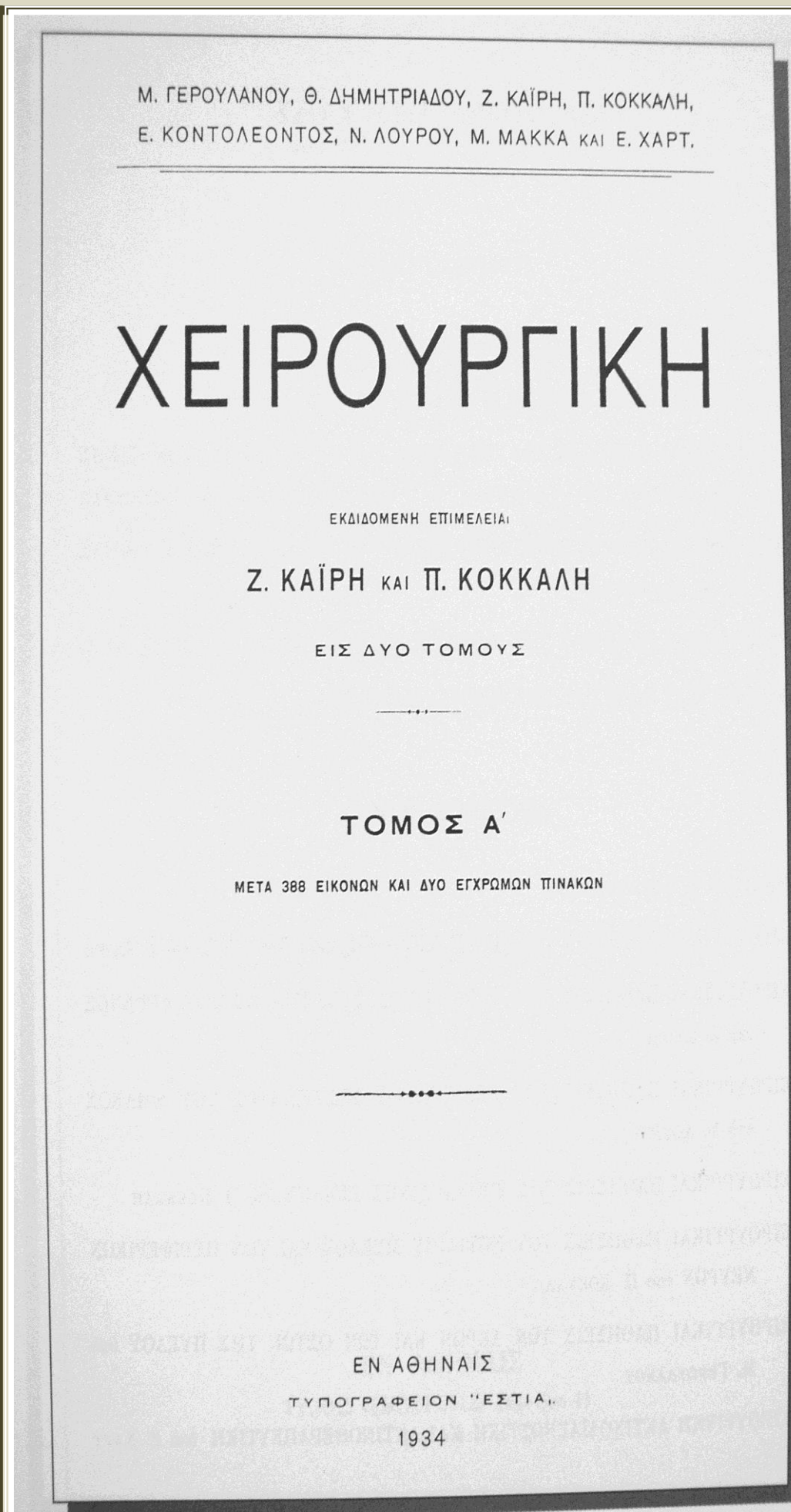
In 1939, Dr. Petros Kokkalis was elected Professor of Surgical Anatomy and Surgery in the University of Athens. He is actually the founder of several surgical specialties in Greece (thoracic, cardiac, vascular and neurological surgery).

He was also an excellent academic teacher and a productive writer. The two-volume textbook of surgery, co-authored by his collaborator Z. Kairis, proved to be a cornerstone of surgical bibliography and teaching.

In 1940, Professor Kokkalis was elected President of the Hellenic Surgical Society.

The Greek Civil War (1946-1949) interrupted his pioneering and productive academic career in Greece. He and his family moved to East Germany.

The epilogue of his outstanding scientific career coincided with his appointment as a Professor of the Humbolt University and Member of the German Academy of Science. Professor Kokkalis died in East Berlin and, following his last wish, was buried in Greece (January 28, 1962).



Textbook of  
Surgery  
Kokkalis & Kairis  
Athens, 1934

### PROFESSOR KOKKALIS: A PIONEER NEUROSURGEON

The history of Modern Greek Neurosurgery is closely associated with Evangelismos Hospital. The beginning of neurosurgery as a separate surgical field was marked by two events: the establishment of the Department of Neurology by Professor John Patrikios (1933) and the appointment of Dr. Petros Kokkalis as Chief of the 3rd Department of Surgery (1935).

The Annals of Evangelismos Hospital and the Bulletins of the Hellenic Surgical Society and Medical Society of Athens report that Professor Kokkalis was the first to perform independent-complex neurosurgical operations in Greece. Several of his pioneering neurosurgical publications are quoted below:

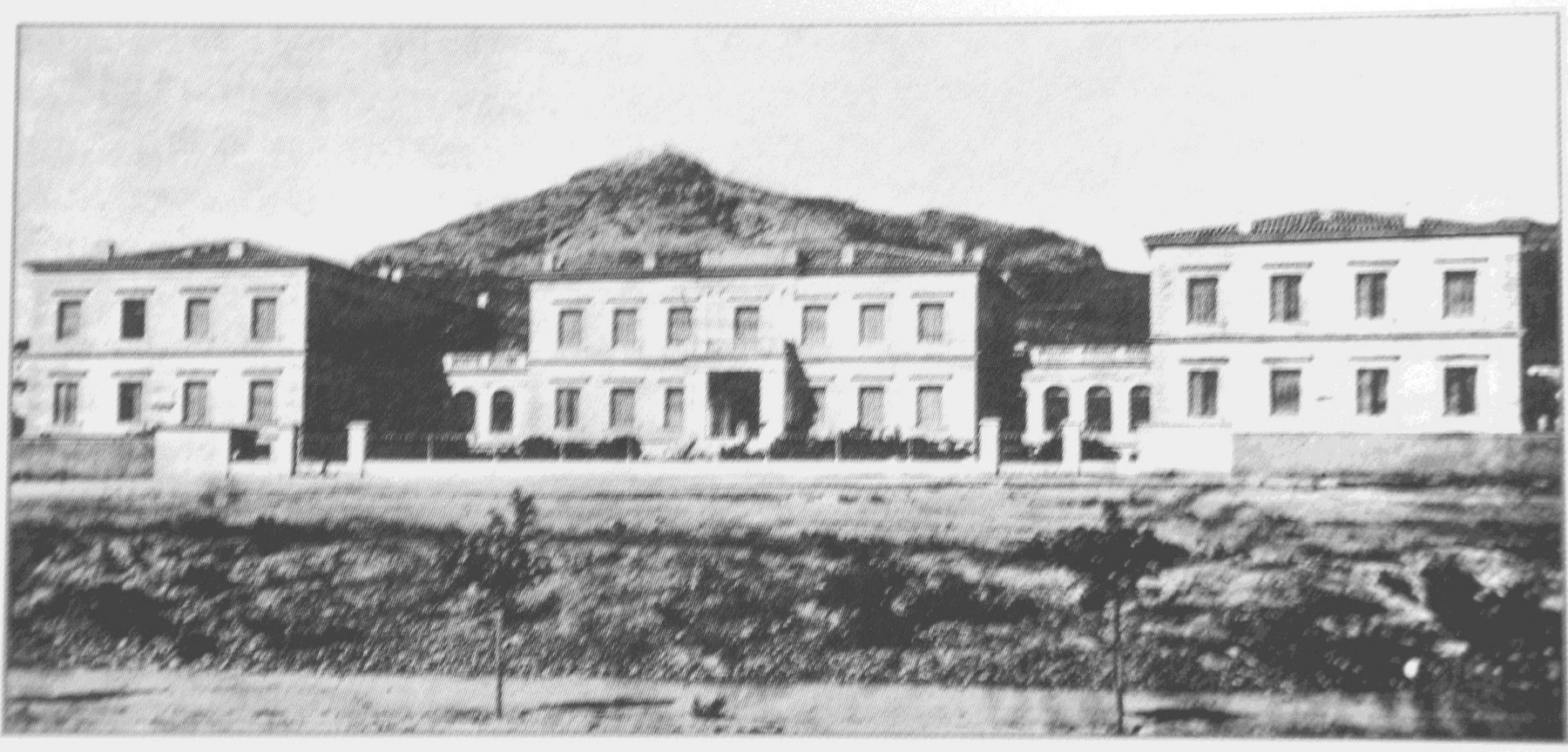
- Kokkalis P, Patrikios J. Successful removal of a Cerebellar Glioma (1930)
- Kokkalis P, Patrikios J. Successful partial removal of a glioma of the vermis (1934)
- Kokkalis P, Vlavianos G. Successful removal of a subdural thoracic psammoma (1936)
- Kokkalis P. Hydatid cyst across the spinous process of the 7th thoracic vertebra – Report of a case (1936)
- Kokkalis P, Patrikios J. Tumor of the posterior fossa. Clinical improvement after surgical removal and radiotherapy (1937)
- Kokkalis P. Clivus space occupying lesion protruding to the epipharynx (1938)
- Kokkalis P, Griponissiotis V. Glossopharyngeal neuralgia (1939)
- Kokkalis P. Report of two cases of spinal cord tumors (1939)
- Kokkalis P, Anastassopoulos G, Griponissiotis V. Drainage of a cyst of the cerebral peduncle through the third ventricle (1940)
- Kokkalis P, Griponissiotis V. Cystic meningitis of the posterior fossa (1940)
- Kokkalis P, Griponissiotis V. Brain abscess secondary to septic frostbite (1941)
- Kokkalis P, Griponissiotis V. Cystic ependymoma of the left parieto-occipital lobe – Report of a case (1943)

Professor Kokkalis was not only a brilliant general surgeon but also a pioneer surgeon for his era. He introduced numerous demanding procedures for the management of complex pathologies of the central nervous system, thus expanding the spectrum of neurosurgical practice in Greece. His works and scientific publications opened new horizons for the development of neurosurgery in Greece as a separate medical branch.

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GREEK NEUROSURGERY

The contribution of Professor Kokkalis to the establishment of neurosurgery in Greece as an independent specialty was multidimensional. He was a brilliant surgeon, a productive writer, a pioneer researcher, but above all, he recognized the surgery of the central nervous system as a separate surgical field.

Professor Kokkalis urged Dr. Griponissiotis, one of his residents in Evangelismos, to become the first neurosurgeon of Greece. Dr. Griponissiotis underwent training in Europe (Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, 1937-1939) and USA (Baltimore, Chicago, 1947-1949). Upon his return, Dr. Griponissiotis established the first Department of Neurosurgery in Greece (Evangelismos Hospital, 1950). After 16 years of neurosurgery and hundreds of successful operations, he became the first Professor of Neurosurgery in the University of Thessaloniki (1966).



Evangelismos Hospital  
Athens - 1939

#### REFERENCES

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- Polyzoidis K, Karavelis A. Perspectives in neurosurgery: Neurosurgery in Greece. Neurosurgery 1994;35(5):942-3
- Stranjalis G, Leventis A. Perspectives in neurosurgery: Neurosurgery in Greece. Neurosurgery 1995;37(2):356-7
- Nosokomiaka Chronika 1984;46(1-2):106-107
- Griponissiotis V. Memories and thoughts. Athens, 1981

### EPILOGUE

Professor Kokkalis was the first to perform complex neurosurgery in Greece and hence is the founder of Modern Greek neurosurgery.

In 2001, the *Hellenic Center of Neurosurgical Research “Professor Petros S. Kokkalis”* was founded in Athens as a recognition of his contribution to neurosurgery.

The HCNS aims to keep his name alive as well as to inspire new scientists in the demanding fields of neuro-surgery and neuroscience.