

**16.09.2014**

## **Press Release**

### **MITERA: Certified as a Baby-Friendly Hospital**

In accordance with General Register No./Ref. 79023 decision of the Greek Ministry of Health, MITERA has been certified as a Baby-Friendly Hospital, since it implements the practices required by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) with regard to breastfeeding.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) for maternity hospitals is based on the joint declaration of WHO and UNICEF to "Protect, promote and support breastfeeding". According to the initiative, a maternity hospital must implement the 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and comply with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes so as to be recognized as a Baby-Friendly Hospital (BFH).

Dedicated to offering top-level maternity services, with a deep sense of respect for mothers and babies, MITERA implements all the global criteria of the BFHI, which are included in its Written Breastfeeding Policy and are applied by its fully trained staff. The Hospital offers free prenatal classes on breastfeeding, so that expectant mothers may fully understand the benefits of breastfeeding and be taught the art of breastfeeding.

It also operates a 24-hour hotline (+30 210 6869000) as well as a Breastfeeding Outpatient Clinic for information and assistance on matters related to breastfeeding.

In addition, the Hospital promotes skin-to-skin contact immediately after childbirth so that mothers can welcome their newborns, assist them in adapting to life outside the womb and have the chance to experience their first breastfeeding. Throughout their hospital stay, new mothers may also choose the rooming-in service, with the practical, emotional and scientific support of the staff, so as to give their newborns the best start in their common life.

Commenting on this certification, MITERA Hospital's Chairwoman, Ms Areti Souvatzoglou, stated, "We are filled with pride, since this proves that MITERA is ranked at the top in terms of quality services, with a deep sense of respect for mothers and babies. Besides, breastfeeding is the given right of any child and any mother. For this reason, we are standing by them, offering the best possible support to mothers and children, assisted by the accumulated knowledge and experience of MITERA's 35-year history."

### ***A few words about breastfeeding***

*Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food to infants. Brain function is pivotal in humans and breastfeeding promotes sensory and cognitive development, decisively contributing to a child's physical and mental wellbeing. WHO, UNICEF and the National Breastfeeding Committee recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life. Thereafter, infants should receive solid foods with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond, provided mother and child wish so.*

*Research evidence\* has shown that babies who are exclusively breastfed for 4-6 months run a lower risk of developing gastroenteritis, acute otitis media, other upper and lower respiratory tract infections, urinary tract infections, type 1 diabetes, obesity later in life and sudden infant death syndrome.*

*The benefits are just as significant for preterm babies and relate to the nutritional and immunological properties of breast milk, as well as the contribution of breastfeeding to their mental and neurological development.*

*Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of the mother developing breast and ovarian cancer, while it plays a unique role in creating a bond between mother and child. Finally, breastfeeding is a cheap and environmentally friendly way of feeding a baby; is quick, since it does not require any preparation; and is convenient, as it can be performed at home or anywhere else.*

*[\*UNICEF, WHO, Institute of Child Health]*