

Headline	Greek debt crisis and cutbacks may fuel health tragedy		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (Kuching)		
Date	19 Oct 2011	Color	Black/white
Section	Business	Circulation	88,150
Page No	B11	Readership	166,173
Language	English	ArticleSize	343 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 1,975
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 5,925



# Greek debt crisis and cutbacks may fuel health 'tragedy'

**ATHENS:** Greece's debt crisis and ensuing cutbacks have played havoc with public health with a spike in ailments, suicides and depression, experts said, amid warnings of a 'Greek tragedy' in the making.

"Overall, the picture of health in Greece is concerning," said David Stuckler from Britain's Cambridge University who piloted a letter published in *The Lancet* recently entitled "Health effects of financial crisis: omens of a Greek tragedy".

"It reminds us that, in an effort to finance debts, ordinary people are paying the ultimate price are losing access to care and preventive services, facing higher risks of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, and in the worst cases losing their lives."

An Athens osteopath, speaking to AFP, said patients only came to him in dire condition with 'either frozen backs or unable to walk', whereas earlier about half the number came 'for wellness treatments'.

"I find my patients very much more under pressure and stressed, their incomes are declining," the osteopath said, adding that their relations at work and in the neighbourhood were strained, leading to muscular and bone ailments.

"Often they do not understand why they are in this state and tell me that they have not made any sudden movements or picked up heavy weights," he said.

The *Lancet* document underlined that the number of suicides had risen by 40 per cent in the first quarter of this year compared to the first half of 2010 and that many were prompted by the inability to pay back loans.

However, the suicide rate was much lower than in northern Europe.

In 2009, it stood at three per 100,000 people or about a third lower than the European average, according to Eurostat.

"Violence has also risen, and homicide and theft rates nearly doubled between 2007 and 2009," *The Lancet* said.

A depression helpline operating on a daily basis from May 2008, also said it had seen a spurt in callers.

"In particular, from January to June 2010, 14.3 per cent of the phone calls had to do with the economic crisis whereas from January to June 2011, 28.7 per cent of the phone calls address this issue," said Eleni Louki from Depression Helpline.

Louki said 64.4 per cent of callers were women and 61.6 per cent were from Athens and surrounding areas.

The Health Ministry meanwhile said one Greek man in four and one woman in three suffered from depression, far higher than the global average of one out of eight and one out of five respectively.

— AFP



**POTENTIAL TRAGEDY:** Greeks police officers and firemen stand in front of the Panathinaiko Stadium during a demonstration in Athens. Greek sailors, customs officials and other government employees went on strike and magistrates are to follow suit to protest cutbacks ahead of nationwide strikes this week. — AFP photo