

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Regarding: Announced competition for the academic position of *professor* in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1 Medicine and scientific specialty *Hygiene (incl. labor, communal, school, radiation, etc.)* for the needs of the *Hygiene Education Sector* , Department of *Hygiene and Epidemiology* at Faculty of *Public Health* of Medical University - Varna , published in the *State Gazette*, no. 32 of 26.04.2022

Candidate (single): Associate Professor Darina Naydenova Hristova, Ph.D.

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Ruzha Zlatanova Pancheva-Dimitrova, MD, PhD, member of the Scientific Jury pursuant to order R-102-1161/10.05.2022 of the Rector of the MU – Varna to prepare an Opinion

1. Brief biographical and professional experience of the candidate

Assoc. prof. Dr. Darina Naydenova Hristova was born on April 2, 1975, Provadia . She graduated from Medical University – Varna in 2000. Her professional development as a doctor began in 2001. - Resident at the International House of Scientists "Fr. Joliot -Curie", after which she was a senior expert at the Regional Health Insurance Fund - Varna and from 2003 until now she worked at the MU - Varna. In addition, since 2011, she has a dietetic practice, currently at the "Esthetic Club" MC, Varna

Her academic career started in 2003 at the University of Varna as a part-time assistant, and since 2005 as a full-time assistant in the Department of Hygiene and Disaster Medicine. In the period 2013 - 2015, she was an independent doctoral student at the "Hygiene and Disaster Medicine" Department, specialty "Hygiene". Her dissertation was successfully defended on the topic "*Nutrition behavior, anthropometric indicators, physical activity and physical capacity in underweight, normal and overweight adolescent boys and girls* " and acquired the educational and scientific degree of *doctor* in the specialty of *Hygiene* . In 2015, she was elected as an associate professor in the "Preclinical and Clinical Sciences" department and currently works at the "Hygiene and Epidemiology" department, MU - Varna

Assoc. prof. Dr. Darina Hristova has a recognized speciality in *Nutrition and Dietetics* in 2010. Her postgraduate qualification is mainly related to eating behavior, disorders and approaches, nutrigenomics, evaluation of nutrition and nutritional status, personalized medicine and includes over 15 specialized courses and trainings in Bulgaria and abroad.

2. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific activity

The presented list of the scientific works of Assoc. prof. Hristova includes 54 titles. After taking into account the dissertation work and the publications until the occupation of the academic position of *associate professor*, 26 publications are available for review under the current competition (20 in Bulgarian and 6 in English) in scientific publications, of which 6 are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases and 20 in non-referenced journals or edited collective volumes.

Out of a total of 96 participation in Bulgarian and international forums, 60 are after her habilitation as an associate professor. The total number of citations is 12 in publications in referenced and non-referenced journals and world-renowned databases. Assoc. prof. Hristova participated in 17 research projects at the MU - Varna after her habilitation, one of which was a project financed by the "Science" Fund of the Medical university of Varna.

3 . Major contributions in scientific works

The contributions of Prof. Hristova's scientific works can be grouped in the following main scientific directions:

- ✓ Eating disorders and alternative eating patterns
- ✓ Vitamin D in the genesis of obesity and its role as an epigenetic factor
- ✓ Recommendations for nutrition in the period of motherhood and early childhood
- ✓ Food allergies in infancy
- ✓ Nutrition, nutritional status and physical activity in adolescents
- ✓ Functional foods and additives
- ✓ Nutrition, health risk and food culture among consumers

The candidate's scientific output covers diverse areas of Nutrition and Dietetics and Preventive Medicine. It is a testament to her interdisciplinary interests and collaborative skills that she has studied cutting-edge scientific fields such as hygiene, pediatrics, child development and prevention, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles in general.

4. Educational and teaching activity

Assoc. prof. Hristova's educational and teaching activities began in 2005. Currently, she teaches mainly in the field of Nutrition and Dietetics in Bulgarian for medical students at the Faculty of Medicine and for students from all bachelor's and master's programs at the Faculty of Public Health - Bulgarian and Russian languages.

The annual and study load during the last four academic years is usually more than 300 hours, with the horarium including hours for teaching mainly lecture material.

She conducts training on individual courses for postgraduate qualification in *Breastfeeding Support, Nutrition in the first 1000 days*. She is the author of the program, head and lecturer of the CME course *"Eating disorders - a problem of the 21st century. Possibilities for influence and therapy"*, 2019, etc. She is also the chairman of the state examination committee for the specialty Nutrition and dietetics, 2020, 2021.

Under her guidance, two PhD students defended their dissertations for the educational and scientific degree of *doctor*: Dr. Vanya Margaritova Nedkova – Milanova , Dimitar Borisov Marinov, She also guides currently a few more PhD students - Violeta Dimitrova Snegarova, Ivan Georgiev Enev, Rozalina Stefanova Braikova, Yordan Svetomirov Slavov, Raina Pavlova Tomova – Pehlivanova, Tatiana Mateva Mateva – Ivanova. Dr Hristova is a supervisor and reviewer of more than 10 master's theses from the Preservation and Control of Public Health, Pharmaceutical Management and Care and Public Health. She is a participant in numerous scientific juries for associate professor and professor.

Assoc. prof. Hristova is a reviewer of the scientific journals Journal of IMA , Journal of Biomedical and Clinical Research (JBCR), Scientific editions of the Union of scientists - Varna, "Medicine and Ecology" series, Collections of reports from the International Interdisciplinary Meetings " Alumni Club and Friends", MU-Varna, 2020, 2021.

5. Public and expert activity

Assoc. prof. Hristova cooperates successfully on various topics and projects of a number of institutions, public organizations and companies. She is a Certified Lecturer at the digital course for ongoing medical training at *Nestle Nutrition Bulgaria, for the Endometriosis foundation , Re: Gena , etc*. She participates in a modern form of binary lessons and trainings on topics related to healthy eating, energy balance, physical activity, eating disorders in schools in Varna and in 2022 she headed the initiative committee organizing a series of lectures by medical students for elite schools in Varna within the European Public Health Week. She is regularly present in the university media MU-Vi.tv , where she comments on contemporary topics and current issues in nutrition

She is also a member of a number of scientific and professional organizations: Bulgarian Medical Union, Bulgarian Society of Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition, National Association "Breastfeeding Support", "Bulgarian Society of Pediatric Gastroenterology,

Hepatology and Nutrition" , " European Society of Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism", a member of the Organizing Committee of the Conference "Alumni and friends".

Conclusion

The summarized analysis of the aspects presented above show that the scientometric indicators, professional qualification and social authority of Assoc. prof. Dr. Darina Naydenova Hristova fully meet the requirements of the Regulations for the conditions and procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying the academic position of *Professor* in Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov – Varna.

Due to this, and because of my personal impressions of her academic erudition and professional collegiality, I recommend to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the appointment of the candidate Assoc. prof.. Darina Naydenova Hristova, MD, PhD for the academic position of *Professor* at the Medical University *Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov - Varna* for the needs of the *Hygiene Academic Sector*, Department of *Hygiene and Epidemiology* at Faculty of Public Health of Medical University - Varna.

City of Varna, 20/08/2022

Signature: 

Prof. Dr. Ruzha Pancheva-Dimitrova, MD, PhD