

STATEMENT

By Assoc. Prof. Eleonora Georgieva Dimitrova - Gospodinova, MD, PhD
Head of the Department of Oncology, Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna

Regarding: competition for the occupation of the academic position "Professor" in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine and scientific specialty "Oncology" for the needs of the Department of Oncology, Faculty of Medicine, MU "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna.

The competition was announced in SG No. 83/03.10.2023 and by order of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna No. R-109-516/30.11.2023 I was selected as a member of the Scientific Jury for the competition.

One candidate for the academic position of "Professor" participated in the current competition - Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, who submitted all documents formatted in the required form according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the rules for its application and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the MU-Varna.

I. Brief biographical data about the candidate and his career development

Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD graduated from secondary education at PMG "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Silistra with a Biology profile. In 2002, he graduated from the University of Economics-Varna with a bachelor's degree in economics, specialty in Commodities science. In 2009, he graduated as a medical doctor at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

In 2010, he started working as a fellow in the Clinic of Medical Oncology at UMHAT Saint Marina - Varna. In 2015, he acquired the specialty "Medical Oncology". Since 2016, he has been working as medical oncology specialist at the Clinic of Medical Oncology. Since 2018, he has been the head of the Medical Oncology Clinic, and since 2019, he has been the head of the "Oncology Clinics Direction" at UMHAT Saint Marina.

In 2013, he was appointed as a part-time assistant to the Department of "Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine" at the Medical University of Varna. From 2017 he was a full-time assistant in the same department and in 2018 he was a chief assistant. In the same year, after a competition, he held the academic position of Associate Professor at the "Propaedeutics of internal diseases" department. Since 2020, he is an associate professor at the Department of Oncology. Since 2019, he is the head of the Oncology and Rare Diseases Department at the Research Institute of the Medical University of Varna.

In 2016, he received a PhD in Oncology after defending his dissertation on "Microribonucleic acids miR -17, miR -21, miR -29a , miR - 92 as potential markers for assessing the risk of recurrence after adjuvant chemotherapy in patients with colon cancer ". The dissertation is a thorough and significant study, the research design is modern and scientifically sound . The contributions are original and of great scientific importance.

II. Research activity

For the current competition, Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD presents 12 full-text publications, equivalent to a monographic work - **B4**

The presented publications in the field of oncology can be divided into several categories:

1. Investigation of small non-coding RNAs as prognostic and predictive markers in cancer patients.
2. Markers of response to immunotherapy treatment in solid tumors.
3. Association of time perception with distress in cancer patients.
Association of time perception with other indicators for assessing the psychological state of cancer patients.
Creating ultra-rapid distress assessment tools.
4. Assessment of access to facilities that offer oncology care and its impact on treatment outcomes.
5. Investigation of circulating histones as markers for monitoring oncological diseases.
6. Analysis of the CASPIAN study and its long-term results.

The main contributions of the presented studies are:

- for the first time in the Bulgarian population of patients with CRC, the distribution of allelic and genotypic frequencies of SNSs was studied;
- it was found that a high NLR (neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio) before starting immunotherapy and the presence of sarcopenia are potential risk factors for the development of hyperprogressive disease and that a NLR < 5 is a potential predictive marker to identify patients suitable for second-line immunotherapy treatment;
- a test was created in which, through the subjective assessment of time, the distress of patients with oncological diseases is evaluated;
- a large-scale analysis was performed to prove the role of distance and travel time to the cancer center as prognostic factors in patients with lung cancer;

- an analysis of recently developed strategies for identifying the origin of tumor tissue in blood plasma based on nucleosomes , produced by the fragmentation of nucleosomal DNA, was made;

- participation as a reviewer of the results and subsequent analyses of exploratory results in the CASPIAN study;

Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD presents 33 publications and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information. Γ7

He also presents 12 publications and reports published in non-referenced peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes. Γ8

Assoc. Dr. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD is the author of more than 60 full-text publications in Bulgaria and abroad, and he also has more than 70 citations as the first author in prestigious international journals . He is the co-author of a textbook on medical oncology.

From the provided academic reference, he has a cumulative impact factor of 1276.168 (scientific articles and abstracts in Thomson indexed journals Reuters).

There are 56 participations with presentation of own research output in international and national scientific forums such as ESMO Copenhagen 2016, 2020, 2021, ESMO Barcelona 2018, 2020, ASCO Chicago 2018, 2022, 2023.

From the materials provided for participation in the competition, it is clear that Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD has broad interests in the field of medical oncology, especially in problems related to tumor biology, the intimate molecular mechanisms of oncogenesis, the evolution of oncological diseases and the action of antitumor drugs.

Associate Professor Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD is the scientific supervisor of three successfully defended doctoral students and has three active doctoral students.

III. Teaching activity

Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD participates in the training of medical students in the disciplines Propedeutics of Internal Diseases and Oncology, gives lectures and conducts practical seminars. His academic load for the academic year 2022/2023 is 212 hours with a minimum requirement of 110 hours. He also participates in the training of medical students during their pre-graduate internship, as well as in the training and preparation of medical oncology fellows at the Clinic of Medical Oncology and doctoral students at the Department of Oncology. He leads courses in Oncopharmacology and Palliative Care for fellows specializing in medical oncology.

IV. Conclusion

The scientific output of Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD, exceeds in terms of volume and quality the National minimum requirements set for the academic position "Professor", reflected in Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the MU-Varna.

Based on the presented data and their analysis, I give my positive opinion and recommend to the respected members of the Scientific Jury for the announced competition to vote positively for awarding the academic position "Professor" to Assoc. Dr. Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD.

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