

## Statement

By Prof. Hristo Vasilev Kozuharov, MD, PhD  
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According to order No. R-109-267/25.05.2023. of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna, on the basis of art. 4, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), art. 57, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Implementing Regulations of ZRASRB, art. 6, para. 1, art. 127, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff in MU-Varna and decision according to protocol No. 02/04.05.2023. of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine and protocol No. 1/07.06.2023. from a meeting of the scientific jury.

**Regarding:** Competition for the acquisition of the academic position "**associate professor**" in the specialty "**Psychiatry**", professional direction 7.1. "**Medicine**", field of higher education 7. "Health care and sports" - one, 0.5 full-time position for the Department of "Psychiatry and Medical Psychology", Faculty of Medicine and 1 full-time position for the Second Psychiatric Clinic at UMBAL "St. Marina" EAD-Varna in connection with an advertisement published in State Gazette No. 28 / 28.03.2023.

One candidate participated in the competition: **Ch. assistant Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD** from the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, MU-Varna and Second Psychiatric Clinic at UMBAL "St. Marina" EAD-Varna.

### **Biographical data and professional development of the candidate**

Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD was born on June 7, 1986. Graduated from medicine in 2010 at Medical University-Varna. Since 2010 until 2011 worked as a doctor at CSMP-Varna. Since 2011 is a doctoral student at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Medical University of Varna. 2012 began his work at the Second Psychiatric Clinic at the "St. Marina"-Varna, which continues to this day. Since 2014 after defending his thesis "On some changes in brain asymmetry in schizophrenia" at MU-Varna, he is a "PhD" in the scientific specialty "Psychiatry". Since 2016 has acquired the specialty "Psychiatry". Dr. Zhivko Apostolov also has four years of experience in outpatient practice since 2017 until 2021 in DCC "St. Marina"-Varna. Honorary lecturer at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology - MU-Varna in the period 2018/2019. Assistant since 2019. He is currently main assistant at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology-MU-Varna and the Second Psychiatric Clinic.

Member of: Bulgarian Medical Union, Bulgarian Psychiatric Association, Royal College of Psychiatrists. Fluent in written and spoken English. He teaches psychiatry and medical psychology to English-speaking students. The academic load exceeds the requirements according to the standard.

## **Evaluation of the candidate's research activity**

A report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the rules of MU-Varna, prepared in the Library of MU-Varna, based on information provided by the applicant and the automated information from international scientific databases, has been provided. The publication activity of Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD, meets the scientometric requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor", and includes: PhD thesis, Habilitation work - monography, Scientific publications in journals with/ without SJR and/or IF and collections - 15, Chapters in University textbooks - 1 in co-authorship, Participation in scientific forums - 7, Number of citations reflecting scientific activity - 11.

Of the full-text scientific publications in journals - 4 are in English, 11 in Bulgarian. Dr. Zhivko Apostolov is the independent author of 5 of them; first author in 6 and fourth in 2.

The main topics in the candidate's research work are related to the areas: Schizophrenia, Evolutionary Psychiatry and Brain Asymmetry.

### **The main directions of scientific works are:**

Schizophrenia

Evolutionary psychiatry

Philosophy and psychiatry

Depression and anxiety disorders

Brain asymmetry

*The first thematic area is Schizophrenia (D.7.1; D.8.2; D.8.3; D.8.4; D.8.9).* A series of 3 reviews and 2 self-reported articles (G.7.1; G8.9) respectively discuss changes in prescribing patterns of antipsychotics and other psychotropic drugs for first-episode schizophrenia between 2005 and 2015 period of introduction of the main SGAs and their generic versions available; presented a clinical case discussing differential-diagnostic problems between schizophrenia and a form of encephalitis; a review of new and future pharmacotherapeutic options in schizophrenia, as well as the options for psychotherapeutic interventions in the treatment of schizophrenia.

*The second thematic area is Evolutionary Psychiatry (C.3. Monograph; Publication D.8.1).* In the habilitation thesis "Evolutionary Psychiatry, A Different Look at Schizophrenia and Psychopathology", the author emphasizes the evolutionary factors that play a role in the emergence of psychopathology. The monograph examines evolutionary theories relevant to most mental illnesses, with a primary focus on schizophrenia.

In the article (D8.1) Schizophrenia - an evolutionary perspective, the author discusses these views in the same spirit and shares his own data from his dissertation work in this direction.

*The third thematic area is Philosophy and Psychiatry (Publication D.7.2).* The presented review discusses philosophical issues regarding embodied cognition and the importance of the physical body in cognitive abilities and its interaction with the environment. The concept of impaired embodied cognition offers opportunities for new treatment strategies through psychotherapy and body-centered interventions, and may eventually offer biomarkers for diagnosis.

*The fourth topic area is Depression and Anxiety Disorders (Publications D.8.5; D.8.6; D.8.7; D.8.8; D.8.11; D.8.12).* In the reviews presented, problems of practical importance in clinical practice are discussed, such as: the methods of personalized medicine in the treatment of depressive disorders; the possible relationship between mitral valve prolapse and panic disorder; improving the identification of depression and other mental disorders in patients

with diabetes and ensuring adequate, complex treatment; the main therapeutic challenges in the treatment of anxiety disorders during pregnancy and lactation, the relationship between irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression.

*The fifth thematic area is Brain Asymmetry (A.1. Dissertation work).* In the dissertation work for the award of the ONS "Doctor on the topic "On some changes in brain asymmetry in schizophrenia" (A1), the author emphasized that for the first time in our country an attempt was made to reveal deficits in lateralized cognitive functions in patients with schizophrenia, the frequency of non-right-handedness (left-handedness) among patients with schizophrenia was investigated and compared with that in the Bulgarian population. The assumptions that left-hemispheric and right-hemispheric dysfunction coexist in schizophrenia were confirmed. Hypothetical projections of brain asymmetry in the diathesis-stress model for schizophrenia were proposed.

The academic reference includes a full-text publication beyond the minimum scientometric requirements for the appointment of AP "Associate Professor", in which the simultaneous use of some first- and second-generation antipsychotic drugs in patients with various types of cancer is discussed in the form of an overview as a new therapeutic option.

From the presented information about the research activity of Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD, his scientific interests and in-depth theoretical knowledge in them are outlined. He works purposefully and actively to improve his professional qualification. I would recommend that he continue his publication activity with an emphasis on articles in journals with an impact factor.

## Conclusion

Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD is a teacher, clinician and researcher. Its indicators for research, teaching and clinical activity fully meet the requirements of the Recommended Criteria of the Regulations for the Implementation of the 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 Medical University - Varna.

In conclusion, everything stated so far gives me the reason to give a **positive** opinion and to propose to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the awarding of the academic position "docent", professional direction 7.1. "Medicine", field of higher education 7. "Health care and sport" for the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine-MU-Varna and the Second Psychiatric Clinic at the St. Marina UMBAL EAD-Varna.

11.08.2023г.  
Varna

Prepared the Statement:  
/ Prof. Hristo Vasilev Kozhuharov, MD, PhD/

