

REVIEW

In connection with the procedure for filling the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "General Medicine," professional field 7.1. Medicine, area of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports for the Department of General Medicine at the Medical University of Varna

Reviewer: Member of the Scientific Jury and author of this review – Prof. Dr. Arman Shnork Postadjiyan, MD

The competition for the position of "Associate Professor" for the Department of General Medicine at the Medical University of Varna was announced in the *State Gazette*, No. 45 on May 28, 2024. The sole candidate is Chief Assistant Dr. Svetlana Hristova Hristova, MD, a senior assistant in the Department of General Medicine at the Medical University of Varna.

Dr. Hristova was born on September 8, 1974, in Shumen. In 1998, she graduated with a master's degree in medicine from the Medical University of Varna and began her professional career as a physician immediately after completing her higher education—initially at the Emergency Medical Center in Varna (1998–2005), and from 2010 as a physician-therapist in the Rheumatology Clinic at "St. Marina" University Hospital in Varna. After successfully passing the competition in 2005, she was appointed as an assistant in General Medicine at the Department of General Medicine and Clinical Laboratory at the Medical University of Varna. In February 2016, she was enrolled as a doctoral student in the independent preparation for a doctoral program in "General Medicine" at the Medical University of Varna. In January 2007, after successfully passing the state examination, Dr. Hristova acquired her specialty in Internal Medicine. On June 1, 2011, she obtained her specialty in Rheumatology, and in early 2018, she earned a specialty in General Medicine. She has undergone certified training in GCP (Good Clinical Practice) at the Institute of Clinical Research in the UK in June 2007 and again in May 2015. Dr. Hristova is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association and EURACT (European Academy of Teachers in General Practice and Family Medicine).

Since 2005, she has held the positions of assistant and senior assistant in the Department of General Medicine at the Medical University of Varna, and from 2011 to 2016 and from 2020 onwards, she has been a chief assistant in this department.

Throughout her academic development, she has participated in numerous national and international forums in the fields of general medicine and rheumatology.

She is proficient in written and spoken Russian and English.

The report on her teaching workload confirms Dr. Hristova's participation in the undergraduate and postgraduate training in the discipline of General Medicine at the Medical University of Varna. For the period 2019-2024, a total of 857 teaching hours are indicated, averaging 172 hours per year. Dr. Hristova's responsibilities involve participating in lectures, practical classes, and examination sessions for students, teaching in both Bulgarian and English, as well as individual training, seminars, and supervision for specializing general practitioners.

In 2019, Dr. Hristova successfully defended her dissertation on the topic "Predictors and prognostic indices for the clinical course and treatment effects in patients with rheumatoid arthritis," earning her the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the specialty of

“General Medicine” (Diploma No. 350 from the Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles dated December 23, 2019).

Dr. Hristova participated in the competition by submitting 25 scientific works for review, distributed as follows: dissertation work: 1; monograph: 1; full-text articles: 25, of which 6 are published in scientific journals that are refereed and indexed in internationally recognized databases, and 19 in non-refereed journals with scientific review.

The actual publications are printed in major Bulgarian medical journals (28 issues): General Medicine - 4, Medinfo – 4, Health Policy and Management - 4, Rheumatology - 2, Health Management - 1, Health Economics and Management - 1, Pediatric and Infectious Diseases - 1, Scripta Scientifica Medica - 3; and one article in the collection “Aging and Health.”

In the aforementioned publications, Dr. Hristova is the first author on 7 papers, the second author on 5, and the third and subsequent author on 15. Three of the scientific presentations from the 21 submitted have been presented by Dr. Hristova as the lead author, as evidenced by the published abstracts from the forums.

Dr. Hristova is the sole author of the monograph “Personalized Medicine in Medical Practice.”

The citation report indicates 6 citations, of which 2 are citations or reviews in scientific journals that are refereed and indexed in internationally recognized databases or in monographs and collective volumes, while 4 are citations or reviews in non-refereed journals with scientific review.

Dr. Hristova's research activities are focused on the following main areas: identifying and preventing childhood obesity. The publications related to identifying overweight in adolescents and adults as a health problem and the preventive activities of general practitioners in this regard are particularly noteworthy. The conducted studies allow for identifying the problem, its association with physical activity and dietary habits, and proposals for creating a functioning algorithm involving all stakeholders—children, general practitioners, endocrinologists, pediatricians, preschool and school specialists, and families for effective preventive activities.

The role of general practitioners regarding patients with rheumatological diseases and the related diagnostic and therapeutic challenges, as well as the prevention of these diseases, is another area of focus. Based on the literature review, practical experience, and research work with patients suffering from back pain, an algorithm for the behavior of general practitioners and recommendations has been developed and proposed.

Another area of Dr. Hristova's work is health promotion activities in general medical practice. The scientific publications in this area reflect interest in identifying the opportunities for general practitioners to promote health and prevent diseases as essential factors for the health status of the population, particularly in combating chronic non-communicable diseases, supporting the health of healthy individuals, and early screening and diagnosis of neoplasms and socially significant diseases.

Another topic of significant practical importance is the communication skills and approach in dealing with people with various chronic diseases and ethnicities, disabilities, and palliative care in general medical practice. The need for knowledge among general practitioners regarding the implementation of palliative care, as well as communication skills concerning issues arising

in cases of disability, terminal illness, including euthanasia, is discussed in detail. In her practice, Dr. Hristova cares for patients of various ages, illnesses, and ethnicities. This requires her to possess extensive knowledge in various medical fields while being mindful of the cultural differences existing among individuals of different ethnic backgrounds, defining specific aspects concerning their health.

The conducted research is not solely a subject of literary developments but finds a natural continuation in Dr. Hristova's work with medical students and specializing physicians. The significance of the results obtained is critical, given the societal importance of the studied pathology and the lack of comprehensive developments in this field.

Dr. Hristova's applied research activities are focused on medical education and the daily medical work of general practitioners. As a result of her research work in each of the developed topics, algorithms and recommendations for behavior have been proposed.

In conclusion, Dr. Hristova presents herself as a well-rounded specialist with extensive experience in medical practice, research, and teaching. She holds recognized specialties in internal medicine, rheumatology, and general medicine, has defended a dissertation, and has earned a Doctor of Medicine degree. She is an established educator in the field of general medicine, with a very high teaching load, having progressed from assistant to chief assistant since 2005. Her participation as the sole author or co-author in the few existing monographs in our country and published articles in the field of general medicine attests to her credentials. Her scientific output is sufficient in volume and content, and regarding its significance, novelty, and the rationale of her scientific achievements, meets the requirements of the Higher Education Act for awarding the academic position of "Associate Professor."

On these grounds, I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively and recommend to the Rector of the Medical University of Varna that Dr. Svetlana Hristova Hristova, MD, be appointed to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of General Medicine at the Medical University of Varna.

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City of Varna

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