

REVIEW

In regard to the application for an academic position „Associate Professor“ in scientific specialty „Psychiatry“, for the needs of Medical University-Varna; Competition announced in SG No. 07/23/01/2024.

By Academician Prof. Dr. DROZDSTOY STOYANOV STOYANOV, MD, MD, MU-Plovdiv, Head of the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology and Director of the Research Institute.

By order No. R-109-118/22.03.2024 of the Rector of MU-Varna, I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury under the above contest, and based on Minutes of Protocol number 1/04.04.2024 of a meeting of the Scientific Jury I was elected as a reviewer.

One candidate participated in the competition - Dr. Tatyana Ivanova Telbizova, MD.

1. Brief biographical data and career development of the candidate

Born in 1976. He graduated with a degree in „Medicine“ at the Medical University-. Varna in 2001 and „business administration“ at NBU in 2009; board certified with a specialty in psychiatry at the same graduate school in 2019, and in forensic psychiatry, 2017.

She worked consequently in the system of the pharmaceutical industry in the period 2002-2011 and then –at UMBAL „Saint Marina“, Clinic of Psychiatry. Since 2018, Dr. Telbizova has worked as a part-time and full-time assistant professor, and since 2022 has been promoted to head assistant in the Department of Psychiatrists in Medical Psychology of MU-Varna. In 2021, the candidate defended dissertation for PhD degree on the problems of the pain experience in patients with depression.

Dr. T. Telbizova systematically participates in the educational process with students and as an expert in legal proceedings.

1. Quantitative indicators

The candidate participated in the competition with a total number of scientific works: 11.

Besides those, 3 papers are related to the PhD dissertation thesis, and presented in the current contest for „Associate Professor“: 11. Of these, one monographic work and 10 articles: (5 of those published reports from scientific forums).

Dr. Telbizova has taken part in a number of scientific forums.

According to an academic record on the author, the works with her participation have been cited 6 times, outside the Web of Science system. In connection with the procedure for PhD, 3 publications accepted in non-indexed periodicals and collections.

It should be considered that the candidate's articles are only in Bulgarian journals that have been indexed on Scopus during different periods (Journal of IMAB from 2015 to 2017, and the Bulgarian Journal of Psychiatry since 2023).

In this sense, and in the interest of MU-Varna's reputation as a research university, it is desirable that Dr. Telbizova publishes her works in internationally acknowledged journals with an impact factor by Clarivate Analytics. Therefore, and in my capacity as an editor of a thematic issue of the journal Brain Sciences (IF=3.3), I have invited Dr. Telbizova to present her article there, which is currently being reviewed.

In summary, it can be concluded that the minimum quantitative criteria in the Regulations for the application of the relevant legislative acts in MU „Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov“-Varna for „associate professor“ are fulfilled.

2. Qualitative indicators

According to the presented report on scientific contributions, the same can be summarized in four thematic directions as follows.

I. PSYCHIATRIC ASPECTS OF PAIN

Here, the candidate's scientific work reflects studies of the interrelationships between mental disorders and pain, the specifiers of pain as a symptom, and its treatment in mental disorders. Besides the psychiatric aspects of pain, Dr. Telbizova researches the influence of depression on pain at several levels – sensory, experiential and situational. The monograph presented in this contest also extends in this field.

The monographic work has a volume of 238 pages. It is based on original data and is accompanied by a full bibliographic reference. Reviewers of the latter are qualified lecturers from MU-Varna. In principle, I endorse the contributions of the author in this book, allowing myself only to point out procedurally that it is desirable that reviewers are external to the organization.

Pain in depression has been a widely discussed topic in recent years, especially with the introduction of some new medications. The psychiatric aspects of pain do not only cover the experiences of psychogenic pain and self-harming behavior inherent in mental disorders. They reflect and complement the connections of psychiatry with other fields of medicine. In this way, through the means of liaison psychiatry, they confirm the participation of the psychiatrist in the complex of diagnostic and treatment activities in patients with a complaint of pain.

Here is the place to emphasize that after the deadline for submitting documents under the current competition, the peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary textbook on Counseling and Connecting Psychiatry was published, edited by Dr. Ivo Natsov (Kibea Publishing House, 2024), in which Dr. T. Telbizova has a separate chapter on the same topic.

The high comorbidity of chronic pain with mental disorders (between 37.1 and 78%) causes a number of socio-economic consequences that become a burden not only for the patient and his relatives, but also for society. Among the most significant medico-social problems are: the stigma towards people with chronic diseases is strengthened, patients lose their autonomy to the point of disability, the possibility of building substance- and drug-dependent behavior increases, the prerequisites for the formation of suicidal risk increase, the shortage of funds for psychological interventions increases, the costs of health care and care rise. The nature of the solutions to some of these problems are complex and depend to a large extent on state policy. However, any doctor can contribute to reducing the negative consequences for the patient by expanding his field of knowledge and competence and being alert to the need for psychiatric care. All these aspects of pain in mental disorders have been studied comprehensively and presented systematized in this scientific direction, supported by examples and observations of the author.

I acknowledge the following scientific contributions in this regard:

1. A critical and systematic analysis of the significant and latest data from pain-related studies has been performed, not only in the field of psychiatry, but also in various fields of medicine and clinical psychology.
2. Basic guidelines related to the diagnosis and treatment of pain in more common mental disorders are presented.
3. Data from clinical cases are presented to support a multidisciplinary approach to pain management.

II. PHENOMENOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PAIN

The scientific problem of phenomenological aspects of pain is reflected in four of the publications presented. Through content analysis, pain experiences in patients with chronic pain and depression were studied. In this method, certain units (words and expressions) and categories are fixed in the descriptions of experiences, on the basis of which conclusions are drawn both about their meaning and about the underlying mental phenomena. An important advantage of the analysis is the ability to determine the frequency of recorded experiences, which allows to derive two groups of experiences – specific and dominant. With the help of quantitative methods, separate samples of patients have been distinguished to carry out a comparative analysis of experiences. Due to its multidimensional nature, pain could not be studied comprehensively, through the application of single methodology. The proposed combination of methods makes it possible to study in depth the semantic, emotional and situational aspects of pain, which can serve for the selection of therapeutic interventions in patients with chronic pain and depression.

In this direction, I confirm the following scientific contributions:

- 1.A concept of a study model of patients with chronic pain and depression combining qualitative and quantitative methods is presented.
- 2.An analysis of data from quantitative methods was performed to explain more deeply the dynamics of the experience of chronic pain.
- 3.A conceptualization and operationalization of pain-related experiences in patients with chronic pain and depression is presented in the direction of their decomposition to a lower hierarchical level for description and analysis.
- 4.The role of situational factors in the formation of the experience of chronic pain in patients with depression was analyzed.
- 5.The need to apply not only pharmacotherapy, but also to conduct cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy aimed at building adaptive strategies for dealing with pain has been confirmed.

III. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND CHRONIC PAIN

In this group of publications, the topic of the interrelationships between depression and chronic pain is addressed. The significance of this scientific problem is argued by the analysis of research data revealing the frequent underestimation of the influence of affective factors in the process of clinical evaluation of patients with chronic pain. Despite knowledge about the different levels of connection between pain and depression (neurobiological and psychological), the proportion of unrecognized cases of patients with depression remains high. A critical analysis of data from the literature was performed, evidencing the negative consequences of the addition of a depressive episode, increasing the patient's suffering with pain and the risks of disability and autoaggression. The interrelationships between anxiety (personal and situational), depression and the severity of pain were studied. The influence of depression and the cumulative influence of affective factors on pain intensity in comorbid patients with chronic pain and depression was studied. Evidence is presented supporting the need for a systematic search for symptoms of depression and their treatment, prior to the formation of suicidal ideation and plans.

In this context, the following scientific contributions can be highlighted:

- 1.The interrelationships between pain intensity, anxiety and depression, as well as the influence of depression and anxiety on pain intensity were studied.
- 2.Offering a set of test methods for assessing and dynamically monitoring pain and affective symptoms in patients with chronic pain and depression.
- 3.An analysis was performed revealing the need to monitor the mental state of patients with chronic pain to reduce the risk of autoaggression and disability.
- 4.The role of the psychiatrist in the diagnostic and treatment process of patients with chronic pain has been confirmed.

IV. EXOGENOUS PSYCHOSES

The scientific publications in this direction of the candidate present clinical cases about the causal relationships between pronounced psychopathological symptoms and exogenous causes.

I can acknowledge the following scientific and applied contributions from these publications:

1.A systematic analysis of data from studies on risk factors for the development of affective and psychotic disorders in treatment with synthetic corticosteroids and the principles of their treatment was performed.

2.A systematic analysis of data from studies on the concomitant Cushing's syndrome was performed with a variety of psychopathological symptoms and mental disorders.

3.Less common catatonic symptoms have been described in Cushing's syndrome.

4.The dynamics in mental symptomatology corresponding to the severity of hormonal imbalance is presented, as well as its resistance to psychotropic treatment.

Before I come to my conclusion, I would like to point out that Bulgarian psychiatry is in a prolonged recession, and is poorly represented in international literature in terms of articles in journals with an impact factor and independent citations in recent years. Therefore, I consider it appropriate for higher schools of medicine to stimulate such publications by changing the minimum requirements for academic development and by funding open access publications.

CONCLUSION

From the above review of the applicant's contributions, it can be concluded that she meets the statutory minimal quantitative and qualitative requirements of the Medical University „Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov“ – Varna for academic promotion to the position of „associate professor“ in the specialty of psychiatry. Based on this, I give my positive assessment and propose to the respected scientific jury to support the nomination for associate professor of Tatyana Ivanova Telbizova, before the Faculty Board.

10.05.2024.

REVIEWER:

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(Prof. Dr. Drozdstoy St. Stoyanov, MD, PhD, DSc, IDFAPA)