

STATEMENT

by Prof. Lora Hristova Georgieva, MD, PhD

Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization,
Medical University „Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov“ - Varna

Regarding: Procedure for the academic position „*Professor*“
in the area of higher education: *7. Health and Sports*,
professional field: *7.1. Medicine*,
specialty: *Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy*,
for the needs of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization
at the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna,
announced in State Gazette, issue 07/23.01.2024.

In the Scientific Jury in the present procedure I was included according to Order №P-109-97/22.03.2024 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna.

According to the Protocol №1/2.04.2024 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I was appointed to prepare a statement for the procedure.

One candidate participates in the procedure - Assoc. Prof. Desislava Ivanova Vankova, MD, PhD, DSc.

All necessary documents and references were submitted, in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Application and the Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Varna.

Biographical data and career development of the candidate

Desislava Ivanova Vankova was born in Burgas. She graduated with a gold medal from the English language high school „Geo Milev“ in her hometown. She graduated as a Medical doctor from MU-Varna in 1993. She began her professional career as a physician in the Internal Department of the Municipal Hospital - Malko Tarnovo (Burgas district), worked as a general practitioner and emergency physician in the municipality of Avren (Varna district), epidemiologist at Hygiene And Epidemiological Inspectorate - Varna, and she has extensive experience in a pharmaceutical company. Graduated with a Master's degree in Public Health at Maastricht University (the Netherlands) in 1999.

She began her academic development as a part-time assistant in the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization at the Medical University of Varna in the period 2000-2001, and in 2015, and in 2016 she has been appointed as a Senior assistant. She is constantly improving her qualifications, taking numerous training courses in Bulgaria and abroad - on public health issues, health technology assessment, modern epidemiology, health promotion and a healthy lifestyle, integrative medicine, „one health“ and antimicrobial resistance, medical pedagogy, etc. She defended PhD thesis with the topic „Health-related Quality of Life in the Community“ (2013) and DSc thesis on „Integrative Medicine - Holistic Conceptual Model, Scientific and Educational Approaches“ (2022). She was appointed as an Associate professor in 2018.

Since 2015 she is the head of the Scientific Department to the Vice-Rector for Science and Research at the MU-Varna. She is a member of the Committee on Medical Ethics at the St. Marina UMBAL - Varna in the period 2018-2022, and of the Research Ethics Committee at MU-Varna from 2020.

Member of: European Public Health Association, European Society of Integrative Medicine, Bulgarian Public Health Association, Bulgarian Scientific Society of Public Health, Union of Scientists – Varna branch, NGO „Public Health-99“, Bulgarian Medical Association. She has a multilingual competencies in English, Russian and French. She has excellent computer skills.

Assessment of the scientific activities

The following scientific works are submitted for participation in the procedure:

- Dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Philosophy / PhD (**Criterion A.1**) – 1;
- Dissertation work for awarding the scientific degree Doctor of Sciences / DSc (**Criterion B.2**) – 1;
- Habilitation work - monograph (**Criterion V.3**) - 1;
- Published monograph that is not presented as a main habilitation work (**Criterion G.5**) – 1;
- A published book based on a dissertation work for awarding the degree DSc (**Criterion G.6**) - 1;
- Publications and reports in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renown databases with scientific information (**Criterion G.7**) – 15;
- Publications and reports in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes (**Criterion G.8**) – 34;
- Published chapter in a collective monograph (**Criterion G.9**) – 1;
- Published university textbook (**Criterion E.20**) – 2;
- Published university handbook (**Criterion E.21**) – 3.

The presented scientific production meets and exceeds the minimum scientometric requirements for the current procedure.

In addition to the minimum requirements, 6 more full-text publications in scientific journals and collections are specified.

The articles have been published in prestigious Bulgarian and foreign journals: European Journal of Integrative Medicine, BMC Public Health, Journal of IMAB, Black Sea Journal of Medicine and Public Health, Asklepios, Scripta Scientifica Salutis Publicae, Notes of the Union of Scientists - Varna, Social Medicine, and etc. Almost half of all publications are in English.

Assoc. Prof. Vankova's strong author position is confirmed by the fact that in 47% of the publications she is a single or first author.

The scientific works and their contributions can be grouped in the following main directions:

1. Quality of life and health.

Health-related quality of life is a priority thematic area, on which Assoc. prof. Vankova has devoted many years of research since her first dissertation. Much of the literature examines subjective assessments of health and happiness, and their importance in evaluating health promotion interventions aimed at reducing health inequalities. Assoc. Prof. Vankova is testing various research tools, with application both at the community level and in clinical medicine.

The first comprehensive study of its kind in our country was conducted on the multifaceted role of quality of life in medicine and public health care in the context of early childhood development.

For the first time, together with a team of researchers in the field of artificial intelligence, intercriteria analysis was used to present an innovative solution for analyzing quality of life, with the aim of identifying the most dependent and the most independent indicators for measuring quality of life in the EuroQol questionnaire.

The application of the Dermatology Life Quality Index, a standardized dermatology-specific questionnaire, to assess the quality of life in patients with lichen simplex chronicus proves the need for subjective assessment of health in chronic skin diseases, as an invariable part of the general assessment of the patient's condition.

2. Health promotion and preventive medicine.

A number of studies confirm that values in society, solidarity and mutual help between generations, as well as cultural traditions, are a protective factor for a good quality of life, especially in advanced age.

A remarkable contribution is the view of Bulgarian folk dances not simply as a unifying social phenomenon, but also as a health promotion intervention to improve physical and mental health, and social functioning. The need to integrate Bulgarian folk dances into the classes of students in the discipline „Sport“ is substantiated, which will contribute to the popularization of Bulgarian folklore, traditions and culture among the multicultural student community. An audio-visual teaching guide for studying Bulgarian folk dances has been created, which has definitely proven its usefulness in learning in an electronic environment during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The idea of „one health“ and its direct connection to infections prevention and control and addressing antimicrobial resistance is presented.

3. Integrative medicine.

The work of Assoc. Prof. Vankova in this direction is reflected in her dissertation work for the degree „Doctor of Sciences“ and in numerous publications and scientific reports at congresses and conferences. The historical development of the concept of integrative medicine, which arose as an ideological movement for the integration of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in health care, is traced. For the first time, a holistic conceptual model has been created that enables a more in-depth study, development and application of integrative medicine.

Scientific searches in this field find their concentrated expression in the habilitation work - the monograph *„Integrative medicine: history, ideological development, informed choice and intelligent investment in the future“*, published by the University Press at MU-Varna in 2021, as well as in the developed original reference book *„Complementary and alternative medicine. A brief terminological reference book of the 21st century“*, published by the University Press at MU-Varna in 2022.

4. Education and research.

Assoc. Prof. Vankova has a special interest in public health education and research methodology.

She has developed innovative teaching models, with applicability in higher and secondary education.

She systematizes, analyzes and compares different research approaches. In her own scientific work, she combines a variety of methods, with an affinity for qualitative studies, in order to investigate holistically the researched problem.

One of her methodological contributions is the developed theoretical model for conducting a Delphi study among health and social experts in a Covid-pandemic environment, called by her Dynamic Delphi.

The total Impact factor is 14,715 – out of 6 publications.

Assoc. Prof. Vankova has profiles in Google Scholar, ORCID, ResearchGate, Scopus and Web of Science, which contributes to the dissemination of her research publications.

The citations of scientific works are 135, of which 42 are in journals referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (**Criterion D.10**), 15 are in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review (**Criterion D.11**), 78 are in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals (**Criterion D.12**) that meet and exceed the minimum requirements.

The scientific competence of Assoc. Prof. Vankova is also manifested in her participation as a member of the editorial board of the journal „Asklepios“, as well as as a reviewer of articles in Bulgarian and international publications, books and textbooks.

Under her scientific supervision, two dissertations (**Criterion E.14**) were defended in the specialties „Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy“ and „Public Health Management“. Currently, she supervises 4 more PhD students in the process of developing their dissertations.

Assoc. Prof. Vankova was actively involved in scientific and educational projects:

- 3 national (**Criterion E.16**);
- 3 international (**Criterion E.17**);
- head of 3 national (**Criterion E.18**);
- head of 2 international (**Criterion E.19**).

Assoc. Prof. Vankova's overall production includes over 100 publications in Bulgarian and international journals, 5 monographic works, 5 textbooks and handbooks, over 100 participations with plenary lectures, reports and posters at scientific forums in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Ireland, etc.

Acknowledgment of her successful presentation was the Oxford Publishers Award for poster at the VIII European conference on public health in Milan, Italy (2015).

Assessment of the educational and methodological activities

Assoc. Prof. Vankova has nearly 29 years of work experience, of which over 7 years of teaching experience at MU-Varna. She conducts lectures and exercises for students of medicine and dentistry (Bulgarian and English language training), nurses, midwives, pharmacists, assistant pharmacists, speech therapists, kinesitherapists, optometrists, health management, health care management, etc., with an average workload over 350 hours per year, which exceeds the mandatory norm. Participates in program councils, develops and updates curriculum content.

She is a member of the committee for the state examination of medical students and the chairman of the committee for the state examination of nurses and midwives.

She has acquired a specialty (**Criterion E.15**) in Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization since 2000.

She is the author of two textbooks on social medicine (**Criterion E.20**) for nurses and midwives and of 3 teaching handbooks (**Criterion E.21**).

Participates in the training of interns, post-graduate students, and PhD students (**Criterion E.22**). She is the supervisor of two post-graduate students in Social Medicine and Health Management.

She supervised 10 diploma theses in the Master's programs of the Faculty of Public Health at the MU-Varna.

The extensive practical experience in various units of healthcare, the numerous specializations, the participation in scientific events, projects and public initiatives, as well as

the rich general culture, make Assoc. Prof. Vankova an erudite, interesting, respected and beloved educator, providing dedicated support to students.

Her expert activity is also impressive: expert in health technology assessment committees (2016-2019), expert at the European Commission for Project Activity (since 2020), member of the EUPHA Working Group on Access to Medicines (since 2023).

She participates in the teams for the development of three international health policy strategies for the European Commission and the World Health Organization.

Conclusion

The scientific and educational activities of Assoc. Prof. Desislava Vankova, MD, PhD, DSc, fully meet and exceed the criteria for occupying the academic position of „Professor“, in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Application and the requirements of Medical University of Varna.

The scientific works presented are sufficient in quantity, diverse in subject matter and precise in execution. The candidate is a well-rounded professional, with extensive research, academic and expert experience in the country and abroad, a broad outlook, energy, hard worker with a high developmental potential.

All this gives me the reason to give a positive assessment and to confidently propose to the respected Scientific Jury - Assoc. Prof. Desislava Ivanova Vankova to occupy the academic position of „Professor“ in the specialty of Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy, for the needs of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare organization, at the Faculty of Public Health of the Medical University of Varna.

20.05.2024
Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury:
/ Prof. L. Georgieva, MD, PhD /

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