

STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Darina Naydenova Hristova, MD, PhD
Speciality "Nutrition and dietetics", Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology,
Head of the ES Hygiene, Faculty of Public health, Medical University "Prof.
Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna

REGARDING: competition for the academic position of **associate professor** in the field of higher education 7. Health and sports, professional field 7.1.

Medicine, specialty "Hygiene (incl. Occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)", for the needs of the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology at the Faculty of Public Health of the Medical University - Varna, published in the State Gazette, issue 85 of 08.10.2024

CANDIDATE: Chief Ass. Professor Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva - Stoyanova, MD

1. Brief biographical data and professional development of the candidate

Dr. Albena Toneva - Stoyanova was born in 1964. In 1989 she graduated from the Higher Medical Institute in Varna, with a degree in medicine. For many years she worked at the HEI - Varna, initially as a resident physician. In 2000 she became the head of the "TSK" sector, and subsequently - the head of the "KHOX" department at the Regional Institute of Health and Prevention - Varna. In 2006, Dr. Toneva headed the "Health Control" Directorate at the Regional Health Institute - Varna, and later became the head of the "Food Control" Department at the Regional Directorate of Food Safety - Varna, where she was responsible for the supervision of food safety and legislation in the field of food safety. Ten years later, Dr. Albena Toneva changed her professional interests, focusing on clinical practice by starting to work in the Immunohematology Laboratory of the Regional Center for Transfusion Hematology, Varna. In parallel, Dr. Albena Toneva actively participated in teaching at the Medical University - Varna. In 2015 won a competition and became part of the academic staff of the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology at the Faculty of Public Health. In 2020, after defending her dissertation, she took up the position of Chief Assistant Professor. She teaches students from various specialties at the FOH and the FACULTY OF MEDICINE, with the main topics she develops being in the field of hygiene, nutritional hygiene and health prevention. Dr. Toneva has an acquired specialty in "Nutrition and Dietetics". She uses several languages in her work: Russian, German and English.

2. The candidate's scientific activity and achievements

The main scientific interests of Dr. Albena Toneva are in the field of health prevention and especially nutrition and nutritional status of children with neuropsychiatric diseases. Her dissertation examines the relationship between

nutritional status and the quality of life of parents and caregivers of children with such diseases.

Dr. Toneva's scientific publications number **53 scientific articles**. Of these, **9** have been published in prestigious scientific journals, indexed in **Scopus and Web of Science**. These are articles on the topics of nutrition, prevention of socially significant diseases. Dr. Toneva has published one monograph: "Nutritional aspects of the "silent pandemic" - autism and cerebral palsy", which again emphasizes child nutrition in neurological disorders. Dr. Toneva participates in various scientific formats, where she actively presents the results of her scientific work. She has visited 62 scientific forums, where she has presented 33 posters. It is also worth noting her participation in four scientific projects, including international initiatives such as the CD-skills project (Danube Transnational Interreg Program) and COMISS - a project for validating a questionnaire for screening symptoms related to cow's milk protein allergy in infants. Dr. Toneva is an active participant in project No. BG-RRP-2.004-0009-C02 "Enhancing Translational Achievements in Medicine (MUVE-TEAM) – Nutrilect" (2023–2026), as well as project No. 22025 "Molecular Biomarkers in Children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders" (2023–2026), funded by the Science Fund. The candidate's scientific output is evidence of her research potential and professional commitment.

3. Contributions to the candidate's scientific works

Dr. Toneva's scientific contributions are in the fields of prevention, nutrition and public health. Her main contribution is the study of the nutritional status of children with neuropsychiatric disorders, as well as the factors influencing the quality of life of their caregivers. The main part of Dr. Toneva's scientific contributions are original and of a scientific and practical nature. The contributions can be grouped into several scientific segments:

- **the study of nutrition, growth and neuropsychiatric development of children with neuropsychiatric disorders and children from atopic families.** A study of the nutritional status of vulnerable groups of children was conducted using biochemical markers and anthropometric indicators, applied to the standards of the WHO and the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN). The prevalence of malnutrition and macro- and micronutrient deficiencies in children with neuropsychiatric disorders was monitored and a high frequency of vitamin D deficiency was established - key in cognitive development. Some nutritional obstacles in the studied vulnerable group were studied: chewing disorders, swallowing, gastroesophageal reflux and capricious appetite (selectivity in nutrition).
- **the oral status of children with neuropsychiatric disorders:** the oral and periodontal status and its relationship with eating behavior, pathological eating and nutritional deficiencies in children with neurological disorders were studied
- **food allergies in infancy.** The risk factors for the development of food allergy in infancy were analyzed (incl. birth pattern, family history, epigenetic factors,

etc.)

- **nutrition during motherhood:** the emphasis is on the importance of maternal nutrition and the mother's adequate intake of vit. B9, D, p-3 MK for the neurological development of children.
- **organic foods and official state control of foods:** the attitudes and awareness of consumers of organic foods in Northeastern Bulgaria were studied. The system for official control of organic foods and their labeling was analyzed.
- **the study of the quality of life of parents and caregivers of children with neuropsychiatric disorders.** A connection is found between the health and nutritional problems of children and the social relationships and mental well-being of those caring for them.
- **the study of hospital hygiene and nosocomial infections:** nosocomial infections and the most common hospital pathogens were analyzed. The opinion of patients and staff on the safety of the hospital environment was sought and recommendations for improvements were formulated.

4. Teaching activity of the candidate

Dr. Toneva is among the leading specialists-lecturers in the field of nutritional hygiene at the Medical University - Varna. She teaches Bulgarian-speaking students from various specialties, mainly in the disciplines of hygiene, ecology and nutritional hygiene. She teaches in the following disciplines:

- Hygiene and Ecology /Medicine, Dental Technology and Rehabilitation/
- Environment, Nutrition and Health /Health Management/
- Nutritional Hygiene /Public Health Inspector/
- Nutrition in Children with Swallowing Difficulties /Speech Therapy/
- Food Safety and Food Legislation /Public Health Protection and Control/
- Communal Hygiene /Public Health Inspector/
- Hygiene of Children and Adolescents /Public Health Inspector/
- Hygiene and Ecology of the Healthcare Facility /Health Care Management/
- Hygiene of Medical Facilities and Nosocomial Infections /Health Management/
- Modern Concepts in the Design of Medical Facilities /Biomedical Equipment and Technologies/

Dr. Toneva is the supervisor of a significant number of graduates in the field of Hygiene and Nutrition (in the Master's Program in Public Health and Hygiene). She is also a supervisor of postgraduate students in "Nutrition and Dietetics". The candidate is also actively involved in expert groups on the creation of documents in the field of food safety policies, the nutritional status of vulnerable population groups and hygiene practices in healthcare facilities.

5. Membership in scientific organizations

The candidate is a member of the following scientific organizations:

- The Bulgarian Society of Nutrition and Dietetics
- The Bulgarian Association of Public Health

- The European Society of Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN),

With her administrative and public engagement, Dr. Toneva contributes to the development of the scientific community and to the implementation of good practices in the field of health control, nutrition and public health.

Conclusion:

Dr. Albena Toneva-Stoyanova has all the necessary qualities to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of Hygiene. In her scientific work, she demonstrates an interdisciplinary approach, combining knowledge from preventive medicine, nutritional hygiene and public health to create useful practices.

The candidate's scientometric indicators and professional qualifications fully meet the requirements of the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying an academic position of Associate Professor at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

Based on this and thanks to my personal contacts and work with Dr. Toneva and my conviction in her ethics, competence and professionalism, I recommend to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the candidate Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva - Stoyanova, MD to occupy the academic position of Associate Professor at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

Varna
23.02.2025

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679

.....
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Darina Naydenova Hrostova, MD, PhD