

REVIEW

By Prof. Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD

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Regarding: *Competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 7. "Healthcare and Sports", professional field 7.1 "Medicine", scientific specialty "Oncology" for the needs of the Department of Oncology, Faculty of Medicine at the Medical University - Varna, and the Department of Medical Oncology at the University Hospital "St. Marina" EAD.*

Information about the Competition

The competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "Oncology" is announced for the needs of the Department of Oncology, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University - Varna, and the Department of Medical Oncology at University Hospital St. Marina EAD. The announcement for the competition was published in the State Gazette, issue 15/21.02.2025 and on the website of MU - Varna.

According to Order No. P-109-201/16.04.2025 by the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna and in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for its implementation, and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of MU - Varna, I was appointed as an internal member of the Scientific Jury in the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty "Oncology". The decision of the first remote session of the Scientific Jury was for me to present a review.

All procedural requirements for the announcement of the competition, the submission period, and the selection of the Scientific Jury have been fulfilled. Only one candidate submitted documents for participation - **Dragomir Svetozarov Stoyanov, MD, PhD**, a specialist in "Medical Oncology", who meets all requirements of the LDASRB, its regulations, and the rules for academic development of MU - Varna.

All legal requirements for the competition procedure have been fulfilled. The candidate's documents are comprehensive and fully comply with the legal criteria for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Biographical Data of the Candidate

Dragomir Stoyanov, MD, PhD completed his secondary education in 2011 at the Mathematics High School "Dr. Petar Beron", Varna, and in 2017 obtained a Master's Degree in Medicine from the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna. In 2023, he obtained his specialty in Medical Oncology. In 2020, he successfully defended his PhD thesis in the specialty "Oncology" on the topic: "The Relationship Between Distress and Time Perception in Cancer Patients" at the same university.

Dr. Stoyanov began his academic career in 2018 as an **assistant** in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine at MU - Varna. Since 2021, he has been a **chief assistant** in the Department of Oncology at MU - Varna. He has published a monograph on a different topic from his dissertation.

Dr. Stoyanov has participated in prestigious scientific forums, including the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023, and the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) in 2020. He is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association and ESMO.

Dr. Stoyanov's career progression reflects continuous development, matching his growing competence and professional experience in medical oncology.

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Academic Position "Associate Professor"

Dragomir Stoyanov, MD, PhD has met the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Group A Indicators: Includes a requirement for a defended dissertation, which covers **50 points**. Evidence of this has been provided.

Group B Indicators: Under this group of indicators, Dr. Stoyanov covers **100 points**, with a requirement of 100. The candidate has submitted a monographic work on the topic "Palliative care for cancer patients" in a total volume of 260 pages.

Group Г Indicators: This includes the provided publications. Dr. Stoyanov presents 20 scientific publications and abstracts, all of them in full text and published after acquiring the degree "PhD". Seven of the publications are in English and 13 are in Bulgarian.

In this group of indicators, Dr. Stoyanov has **201.38 points**, with a required score of 200 .

The relevant evidence has been presented.

Group Д Indicators: Includes the total number of citation points. In this group, Dr. Stoyanov achieved **90 points**, with a requirement of 50. A supporting material for citations of publications is attached - 6 citations in international journals in the Scopus database and in the Web of Knowledge, attached in an academic reference prepared by MU - Varna (with self-citations excluded) .

Total Impact Factor: 168.111

Summary Evaluation of the Main Scientific Contributions

Dr. Stoyanov's main scientific contributions can be grouped as follows:

1. Research on Distress in Cancer Patients

In his dissertation, Dr. Stoyanov conducted a study of distress in 262 patients with malignant solid tumors. Distress levels were measured using a validated instrument and an alternative ultra-short screening test for distress was proposed by determining the subjective sense of time in patients. In the studied patient population, correlations were studied between basic demographic and clinicopathological characteristics of the patients on the one hand and levels of distress and sense of time on the other hand. Predictive markers were determined that could identify patients at risk of having high levels of distress.

2. Palliative Care in Cancer Patients

In his monographic work, Dr. Stoyanov examines in depth the basic principles of palliative care, presenting current data on the etiology, diagnosis and treatment of the most common problems in patients with incurable oncological diseases. The importance of distinguishing between the concepts of "supportive" and "palliative care" and the need for their effective implementation in the overall treatment approach for cancer patients in order to improve the quality of provided care is emphasized. Along with the practically useful information, a critical assessment of the state of palliative care in the country is presented, identifying a set of problems that worsen access to treatment and the overall quality of palliative care for Bulgarian patients. Dr. Stoyanov also presents his own data from scientific research concerning the difficulties in accessing treatment for cancer patients in Bulgaria and the identification and treatment of distress in patients.

3. Research on Distance from Treatment Centers and Therapeutic Outcomes

In a retrospective study with an impressive number of participants (n=9240), the relationship between the distance and travel time to the oncology center on the one hand and the overall survival in patients with lung cancer on the other hand was investigated. A statistically significant lower overall survival was found with increasing distance and travel time to the medical facility despite similar clinicopathological factors in the patient subgroups.

4. Study of TCTP as a Prognostic Biomarker in Colorectal Cancer

A study conducted on tumor samples from patients with colorectal carcinoma demonstrated a prognostic role of TCTP immunohistochemistry in terms of progression-free survival and overall survival. It was found that patients with high nuclear TCTP expression had statistically and clinically significant lower progression-free survival and overall survival.

5. Study of PIK3CA Mutations in HR+/HER2- Breast Cancer

A large multicenter study investigated the frequency and variants of PIK3CA mutations in patients with HR+/HER2 breast cancer, examining their prognostic role in terms of progression-free survival and overall survival.

6. Research in Fundamental and General Oncology

Dr. Stoyanov presents developments in several areas, including the processes of autophagy and apoptosis, side effects of applied systemic antitumor therapy, and studies of biomarkers and liquid biopsies.

7. Studies on Therapeutic Approaches for Specific Malignancies

In this area, Dr. Stoyanov presents publications related to specific therapeutic approaches for various malignant solid tumors, including colorectal carcinoma, breast carcinoma, prostate carcinoma, lung carcinoma, malignant melanoma, cholangiocarcinoma, and tissue-agnostic therapies.

Evaluation of Teaching Activity

Dr. Stoyanov teaches medical students in “Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine” and “Oncology” (in both Bulgarian and English). From 2019–2024, he delivered 1,116 hours of teaching, including lectures. He is actively involved in departmental administration and exam organization, and he contributed to the development of the “Oncology” lecture course.

Conclusion

Dragomir Svetozarov Stoyanov, MD, PhD is a well-established university teacher and a medical specialist with a strong inclination toward scientific research. The presented publications, citations, documents, and supporting materials convincingly demonstrate that **Dr. Stoyanov** meets the quantitative and qualitative criteria for academic and teaching achievements required for the academic position of Associate Professor, in accordance with LDASRB, its implementing rules, and the academic development regulations of MU - Varna.

Based on the above arguments and evidence, I strongly recommend that the esteemed members of the scientific jury confer the academic position "Associate Professor" upon Dragomir Svetozarov Stoyanov, MD, PhD, in the field of higher education 7. "Healthcare and Sports", professional field 7.1 "Medicine", scientific specialty "Oncology".

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