

## STATEMENT

by Prof. Nikola Yordanov Kolev, MD, PhD, DSc.

**First Clinic of Surgery, University Hospital "St. Marina",  
Head of the Department of General and Operative Surgery  
Vice-Rector for Postgraduate Education  
Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna**

Regarding: the dissertation entitled

"Modern Surgical Approaches in Malignant Diseases of the Gastrointestinal Tract – Clinical and Epidemiological Aspects in Northeastern Bulgaria"

For the award of the scientific degree "**Doctor of Sciences**" in the field of higher education 7.

Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine

**Prepared by: PROF. KOSTADIN GEORGIEV ANGELOV, MD, PhD**

The procedure for the defense of the dissertation entitled "**Modern Surgical Approaches in Malignant Diseases of the Gastrointestinal Tract- Clinical and Epidemiological Aspects in Northeastern Bulgaria**", submitted for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", in the professional field 7.1 Medicine, within the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, at the Department of General and Operative Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov"- Varna, by **Prof. Dr. Kostadin Georgiev Angelov, MD**, is conducted in accordance with the Order of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna, No. R-109-148/24.03.2026, based on the decisions of the Department Council recorded in Protocol dated 16.03.26, and of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine at the Medical University- Varna recorded in Protocol No.56/23.03.2026.

The submitted set of documents for evaluation includes: 1. The dissertation; 2. An extended abstract in Bulgarian, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Medical University-nVarna, as well as an English version; 3. An application to the Rector for opening the defense procedure; 4. A professional curriculum vitae signed by the candidate; 5. A certified copy of the diploma for the completed educational qualification degree "Master", together with its supplement; 6. A certified copy of the diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor (PhD)"; 7. A completed standardized report demonstrating compliance with the minimum requirements for obtaining the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", including paper and electronic versions of the supporting evidence issued by the Medical University- Varna, as well as a report on the original scientific

contributions; 8. A declaration of originality of the dissertation and absence of co-authorship claims; 9. A declaration of authenticity of the submitted documents; 10. A list of publications related to the topic of the dissertation (no fewer than 10 publications) signed by the candidate; 11. Copies of the publications related to the dissertation topic; 12. Other supporting documents; 13. Completed information cards of NACID in Bulgarian and English; 14. A summary of the dissertation in English; 15. A similarity report of the dissertation and the scientific works submitted within the procedure for obtaining the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”, compared with scientific materials available online, including scientific databases and internet sources, issued by the Medical University-Varna. The analysis of the submitted documentation demonstrates that **full legal compliance has been achieved with the applicable regulatory requirements**, including the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University- Varna.

**The structure and design** of the dissertation examine an original theory, contain both theoretical and empirical generalizations, and propose a series of solutions to significant scientific and applied problems corresponding to the level of contemporary science. The dissertation is a completely independent study, fundamentally different in content from the dissertation previously defended for obtaining the scientific degree “Doctor (PhD)”. The similarity report issued by the Medical University- Varna (No. DS001/09.03.2026) clearly demonstrates 0% similarity.

**The topic “Modern Surgical Approaches in Malignant Diseases of the Gastrointestinal Tract-Clinical and Epidemiological Aspects in Northeastern Bulgaria”** is multilayered and complex. It presents serious scientific challenges while simultaneously providing fertile ground for multidirectional research and analysis, allowing the author to demonstrate excellent professional preparation in the field of medicine in general and surgery in particular. In this formulation, the dissertation enables Prof. Dr. Kostadin Georgiev Angelov, MD not only to demonstrate his medical and clinical expertise but also to show his ability to conduct medical scientific projects and research independently and collaboratively, to explore the depths of evidence-based medicine, and to present the scientific-regulatory and applied scientific aspects of research based on large information datasets and real-world evidence through retrospective observational non-interventional methodologies.

**The literature review itself possesses the qualities of an independent dissertation study!** It comprises 117 pages and is based on 1000 bibliographic and internet-based sources, presenting an exceptionally detailed and analytical discussion. In my capacity as a member of the Scientific Jury, and with substantial experience in surgical science and practice, **I would like to emphasize that for the first time I am evaluating a literature review by a Bulgarian author with such an original structure and on such a large scale.**

The review consists of two distinct structural parts: Part I- Analysis of the Health Problem; Part II- Systematic Review of Scientific Publications on the Topic of the Dissertation Using the PRISMA Methodology. The application of PRISMA is again for the first time in Bulgaria within a dissertation in the field of gastrointestinal surgical oncology. For the evaluation of results, the PICOS framework has been applied- Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Study Design-again for the first time not only in Bulgaria but also internationally with regard to gastrointestinal surgical research.

The author presents a compelling scientific narrative that can be conceptualized in two directions. Part I of the review possesses all the characteristics of an independent scientific monograph or textbook on gastrointestinal surgical oncology, whereas Part II represents an independent original scientific project with features of a meta-analysis, prepared according to entirely new scientific standards related to Health Technology Assessment. In this specific case, the author has developed original methodological variations for evaluating the clinical effectiveness of surgical approaches. I consider that the literature review presents the current state of scientific achievements related to the topic of the dissertation and demonstrates a broad and profound understanding of the problem from a scientific and theoretical perspective. Prof. Angelov demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of the cited sources, a full understanding of the most important theoretical and methodological issues, and the ability to generate hypotheses and identify optimal approaches for their justification or refutation, including the methodology of the null hypothesis.

**The objectives and tasks** of the dissertation are formulated with precision. Of particular interest is the main stated objective- to analyze the clinical and epidemiological aspects of malignant diseases of the gastrointestinal tract in Northeastern Bulgaria and the outcomes of modern surgical approaches used in their treatment. Entirely original and introduced for the first time in Bulgaria, this primary objective is followed by a secondary objective- to apply the standards of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) within surgical practice.

The objectives formulated in this way represent a commitment to a serious interdisciplinary research effort with original scientific-theoretical and applied scientific contributions. It should also be acknowledged that the extensive scientific and administrative experience of the doctoral candidate, acquired at both micro- and macro-levels on regional and national scales, including his role as a high-level administrator within the National Healthcare System of Bulgaria, has clearly influenced the formulation of the research topic and objectives. Evidently, this substantial managerial experience and deep understanding of the healthcare system enable the candidate to skillfully formulate a fertile research theme and objectives and to navigate confidently through the innovative methodological approaches characteristic of contemporary science.

Seven research directions have been defined, demonstrating both the broad scope of the candidate's expertise and the scientific value of the dissertation under evaluation.

**The materials and methods** have been selected appropriately, despite the fact that the dissertation presents a mixed methodological framework involving approaches from several scientific disciplines. The doctoral candidate clearly demonstrates mastery of the applied methods and shows that their selection is the result of a conscious and well-considered process. These methods follow logically from the stated objectives, and the sequence of the conducted studies is described clearly and precisely, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the research process and enabling replication of the conducted investigations.

**The presented results** are reliable, valid, and statistically justified, and they correspond fully to the defined objectives and tasks. Their scale, comprehensiveness, and precision are particularly impressive. The results are presented in exceptional detail and illustrated through tables and graphical representations, ensuring transparency, verifiability, and traceability.

The **discussion** section demonstrates a strong analytical character, revealing critical and self-critical reflection. The author identifies advantages, limitations, constraints, and acceptable assumptions within the study and indicates opportunities for extrapolation and generalization- all characteristics typical of high-quality scientific research with international relevance.

**The author identifies, formulates, and claims contributions in several groups- eight original contributions of a scientific-theoretical and methodological nature and seven contributions of a scientific-applied nature.** In addition, confirmatory contributions and recommendations are presented. At first reading, their number may appear relatively large for a single dissertation;

however, it fully corresponds to the scale of the formulated tasks and the broad scope of the study described above.

I fully support the claim of originality of the scientific work and reaffirm the author's formulations and **original contributions of a scientific-theoretical and methodological character, as follows:**

1. For the first time in Bulgaria, surgical oncological pathology has been analyzed through the instrumentarium of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) by means of a retrospective observational study of electronic medical records from real clinical practice.
2. For the first time in the scientific literature, a systematic review of scientific publications following the PRISMA standard has been conducted to evaluate surgical oncological practice in diseases of the gastrointestinal tract.
3. For the first time in international surgical oncological research on gastrointestinal malignancies, a study evaluating clinical effectiveness based on the PICOS framework has been conducted.
4. For the first time in Bulgaria, a narrative observational study of modern surgical approaches for the treatment of malignant gastrointestinal diseases has been performed at both international and national levels, based on the analysis of scientific publications by Bulgarian authors.
5. For the first time in Bulgaria, an epidemiological study of malignant diseases of the digestive tract has been conducted based on a systematic analysis of data from the European Cancer Information System (ECIS) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization (IARC/GLOBOCAN).
6. For the first time in Bulgaria, a locoregional longitudinal retrospective study of malignant gastrointestinal diseases has been carried out, covering one of the six administrative regions of the country.
7. An original author-designed protocol has been developed for the retrospective study, introducing a unique research instrumentarium for conducting systematic reviews of scientific publications for the evaluation of surgical interventions.
8. An original author-modified version of the PICOS framework for evaluating oncological gastrointestinal diseases has been developed. In addition to the standard five elements- P (Population), I (Intervention), C (Comparator), O (Outcome), and S (Study design)- the modified

instrument includes Tumor type, TNM classification, ECOG performance status, and Type of surgery (radical/palliative). This modified version of PICOS (a'Modo Angelov) represents an original contribution of international significance. Without the inclusion of these additional elements, the evaluation of the clinical effectiveness of surgical interventions would be impossible.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The submitted dissertation is distinguished by high scientific value, the relevance of the research problem, and the depth of its analysis. The author demonstrates excellent theoretical preparation, the ability to conduct independent scientific research, and the capacity to formulate well-reasoned conclusions and practically applicable results. The stated objectives and tasks have been fully accomplished, and the methods and approaches applied have been appropriately selected and correctly implemented. The dissertation contains original scientific and applied scientific contributions that enrich surgical science and demonstrate the significant research potential of Prof. Angelov. The obtained results are convincingly presented and defended, while the derived generalizations and recommendations possess both theoretical and practical significance.

Based on the above, I evaluate **POSITIVELY** the dissertation entitled:

**“MODERN SURGICAL APPROACHES IN MALIGNANT DISEASES OF THE GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT – CLINICAL AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ASPECTS IN NORTHEASTERN BULGARIA.”**

I will confidently vote **“IN FAVOR”** of awarding the scientific degree **“DOCTOR OF SCIENCES”** to **PROF. KOSTADIN GEORGIEV ANGELOV, MD, PhD.**

Varna

31.03.2026

Prepared by:

Prof. Nikola Yordanov Kolev, MD, PhD, DSc,

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