ACADEMIC OPINION

by **Prof. Vili Krasteva Stoyanova, MD, PhD**, Head of the Department of Medical Genetics at the Medical University of Plovdiv, appointed to provide this opinion on March 26, 2026 , by a meeting of the Scientific Jury, as per Order № R 109-130/March 16, 2026, issued by the Rector of the Medical University of Varna (MU-Varna). This pertains to the competition for the academic position of "**Associate Professor**" in the specialty of "**Medical Genetics,**" Higher Education Area 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional Direction 7.1. Medicine, for the needs of the Department of Medical Genetics at MU-Varna, published in the State Gazette, issue 6 / January 16, 2026.

The only candidate who submitted documents for the competition is **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Mari Ara Hachmeriyan-Andreeva**.

The documents and materials presented by the candidate meet the requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at MU-Varna.

1. Professional Biography of the Candidate

Dr. Mari Hachmeriyan earned her Master's degree in Medicine from the Medical University of Varna in 2011. Her professional career began in 2012 as an Assistant in the Department of Medical Genetics, and she has held the position of "**Chief Assistant Professor**" since 2018.

In 2017, she was awarded the educational and scientific degree of "**Doctor" (PhD)** in the scientific specialty of "Genetics" (Biological Sciences) following the defense of her dissertation titled *"Maternal Biochemical Screening as a Method for Prenatal Genetic Prophylaxis."* In 2025, she defended a second doctoral dissertation titled *"Genetic Counseling in Patients with Probable Tumor-Predisposing Syndrome,"* receiving the degree of "**Doctor" (PhD)** in the scientific specialty of "Genetics" (Medicine).

She acquired a specialty in "Medical Genetics" in 2018. Currently, Dr. Hachmeriyan combines her academic duties with administrative and clinical responsibilities as a physician and **Head of the Laboratory of Medical Genetics** at the "St. Marina" University Hospital – Varna.

2. General Characteristics of the Scientific Production

For this competition, Dr. Hachmeriyan submitted a total of **33 scientific works**, distributed as follows:

- **Doctoral Dissertation** for the "PhD" degree.
- **10 full-text publications**, refereed and indexed in global databases (Web of Science and Scopus), presented as equivalent to a habilitation thesis (**101.74 points**).
- **14 publications and reports** in refereed and indexed journals outside the habilitation thesis. All of these are in international journals with an Impact Factor (IF), indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (**136.95 points**).
- **1 published book** based on a defended doctoral dissertation (**40 points**).
- **6 publications** in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review (**24.31 points**).

- **1 additional publication** beyond the minimum requirement.

The candidate presented **7 citations** in the Scopus and Web of Science databases (**105 points**), exceeding the required minimum and confirming the scientific value and relevance of her results.

The **total Impact Factor (IF)** of the publications and abstracts for the competition is **42.23**; of these, the full-text publications account for 5, and the abstracts for 37.23.

Her work has been published in international journals such as the *Turkish Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, *Folia Medica*, and the *Egyptian Journal of Medical Human Genetics*. Her overall professional record includes 52 articles and 71 reports, with a cumulative **Total Impact Factor of 72.329**.

3. Main Scientific and Applied Contributions

Dr. Hachmeriyan's research focuses on several key areas:

- **Psychological Aspects of Medico-Genetic Counseling:** This is her leading research direction. She conducted a pioneering study in Bulgaria regarding patient attitudes toward remote counseling (**telegenetics**), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study established its applicability while noting the need for patient adaptation. Her research proved that qualified post-analytical counseling with a geneticist reduces unjustified anxiety and unnecessary medical interventions. A key contribution is proving that genetic counseling is a central element of the diagnostic process, not merely an addition.
- **Prenatal Screening and Diagnostics:** This area is strongly represented, covering biochemical screening, **NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)**, patient attitudes, and cytogenetic results. Her research showed that despite the rise of NIPT, patient understanding is limited, risking misinterpretation. She emphasized the importance of a combined approach (screening and diagnostics) and the critical role of genetic counseling in decision-making.
- **Cytogenetics and Molecular Diagnostics:** Her analysis of classical and modern diagnostics optimized algorithms by combining methods. Results showed that while classical karyotyping remains relevant, **MLPA** and other molecular methods significantly improve diagnostics. She also highlighted the need for ethical guidelines regarding incidental findings in molecular studies.
- **Rare Genetic Syndromes:** The candidate analyzed diagnostic challenges and revealed new genotype-phenotype correlations for syndromes such as **Kabuki, Cornelia de Lange, Bardet-Biedl,** and **16p11.2 duplication**. She emphasized the role of dysmorphological assessment and modern genetic analysis in overcoming the "diagnostic odyssey."
- **Reproductive Genetics:** Her work examined the genetic spectrum of disorders in patients with reproductive issues, proving the link between certain genetic polymorphisms and these problems. She argued that genetic risk is often underestimated due to insufficient patient awareness regarding screening tests.

The candidate's contributions are highly practical, oriented toward improving the diagnosis and prevention of genetic diseases.

4. Teaching Activity

Dr. Hachmeriyan conducts practical classes in **"Medical Genetics"** for students in medicine (Bulgarian and English programs), pharmacy, and for medical laboratory technicians, midwives, and nurses. Her teaching workload ranged from **216 to 293 hours** over the last six academic years (averaging **240 hours**), which exceeds the standard requirements of MU-Varna. Her long-term teaching experience (over 13 years) demonstrates her academic expertise and capacity for training healthcare personnel.

5. Personal Impressions and Conclusion

Dr. Mari Hachmeriyan is an experienced specialist who successfully integrates clinical work in rare diseases with active research and teaching. Her candidacy fully meets the national minimum requirements and the Regulations of MU-Varna.

Based on the presented scientific production, the applied value of her research, and her active teaching, I provide a **positive assessment**. I confidently recommend that the Scientific Jury award Dr. Mari Ara Hachmeriyan-Andreeva the academic rank of **"Associate Professor"** in the specialty of "Medical Genetics" for the needs of the Medical University of Varna.

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Prepared by
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