STATEMENT

by

Prof. Darina Naydenova Hristova, MD, PhD
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concerning the dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)** in the scientific specialty **Hygiene**, entitled:

"Psychophysiological Assessment of Risks to Health and Work Capacity in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises"

by

Galina Dimova Neykova-Sidorenko,
PhD candidate at the Medical University of Varna

1. General Overview of the Procedure

By Order No. R-109-301/28 August 2026 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna, I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine, doctoral programme in Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation hygiene, etc.) to the PhD candidate Galina Dimova Neykova-Sidorenko. The entire procedure, including enrolment in the doctoral programme, passing the doctoral qualifying examination, completion of the doctoral programme, and admission to public defence, has been conducted in compliance with the applicable legal provisions and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at the Medical University of Varna.

By Order No. R-109-477/4 November 2020 of the Rector, Galina Neykova-Sidorenko was enrolled as a part-time PhD candidate for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD), with a dissertation entitled **"Psychophysiological Assessment of Risks to Health and Work Capacity in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises."** The dissertation supervisors are Prof. Teodora Dimitrova, MD, PhD, and Assoc. Prof. Tsvetelina Tarpomanova, MD, PhD.

Following a successful internal defence held on 15 July 2026 and pursuant to Rector's Order No. R-109-301/28 August 2026, the PhD candidate was discharged from the doctoral programme with the right to proceed to public defence.

2. Brief Overview of the Candidate's Professional Development

Galina Dimova Neykova-Sidorenko was born on 11 March 1971 in the city of Yambol, where she also completed her secondary education. She graduated from the Medical University of Varna in 1995 and successfully obtained a specialty in Occupational Medicine in 2024.

At the beginning of her professional career, she worked as a physician in emergency medical services and in a general medical practice. Since 2002, she has pursued her career in various pharmaceutical companies, working as a medical representative and key account manager.

Since November 2020, she has been enrolled as a part-time PhD candidate in the doctoral programme in Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation hygiene, etc.) at the Medical University of Varna.

3. Structure of the Dissertation

The PhD candidate has chosen a topic of considerable importance from both a practical and a public health perspective: the psychophysiological assessment of risks to health and work capacity in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The dissertation comprises 186 standard pages and constitutes a complete and well-developed scientific work. It is illustrated with 23 figures and 68 tables, which facilitate the precise presentation of the findings; most of the tables and figures also provide substantial informational value. The bibliography includes 134 references, of which 126 are in Latin script and eight are in Cyrillic. Three full-text publications related to the dissertation have been published in university journals and a scientific conference proceedings volume.

The text is clearly presented, the dissertation is properly structured, and its individual sections are well balanced. The literature review spans 45 pages, covers all aspects of the subject under investigation, and provides a logical rationale for conducting the research. The information presented on mental health, occupational stress, and stress management is systematically organised and discussed in depth. Particularly valuable are the analysis of stress control and coping strategies, as well as the examination of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health.

The conclusions drawn from the literature review are supported by a substantial number of references, demonstrating the candidate's thorough familiarity with contemporary scientific debates on the subject.

The aim of the dissertation is clearly defined: to conduct a psychophysiological assessment of health and work capacity among employees in administrative and production units within small and medium-sized enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to propose effective work and rest schedules. The five research objectives are clearly formulated and fully adequate for achieving the overall aim of the study.

The study is comprehensive and incorporates a battery of carefully selected, validated questionnaires and tests designed to assess work capacity, mental health,

physical and laboratory markers, and lifestyle habits.

The results are objective and reliable, and their discussion demonstrates competence and depth of analysis. The findings are presented in eight separate, extensively illustrated subsections and indicate that employees' mental health and work capacity in small and medium-sized enterprises are closely interrelated and influenced both by the nature of their work and by the broader organisational and social context.

The study findings confirm that the contemporary working environment, further complicated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, creates conditions conducive to increased psycho-emotional strain. This may manifest itself in higher levels of perceived stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional exhaustion, and fluctuations in subjective well-being.

The observed changes in measures of attention, psychomotor stability, and work capacity throughout the working day and working week indicate that occupational workload does not exert merely an immediate effect but also has a cumulative impact on employees' functional status.

Some of the adverse outcomes observed are associated with behavioural and health-related characteristics, such as insomnia, smoking, insufficient physical activity, and specific features of daily routines. These findings support the understanding that psychophysiological risk is multifactorial in nature.

The results highlight the need for comprehensive interventions, including the optimisation of work and rest schedules, early preventive measures, and psychological support.

The abstract has been prepared in accordance with the applicable requirements and accurately reflects the content of the dissertation, presenting in detail the principal findings, conclusions, and contributions of the research.

4. Contributions of the Dissertation

A significant contribution of this research is the integrated methodological model proposed by the PhD candidate for the comprehensive psychophysiological assessment of work capacity. The model combines objective cognitive measures, psychomotor indicators, subjective assessments of functional status, and standardised psychometric instruments for evaluating stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, burnout syndrome, and work capacity.

Practical guidelines have also been proposed for managing work processes by optimising task allocation according to the identified periods of peak and reduced work capacity.

Galina Neykova-Sidorenko proposes specific and practical recommendations for reducing occupational stress and burnout through the algorithm-based allocation of workload, taking into account the objectively established phases of circadian and weekly variations in work capacity.

5. Publications Related to the Dissertation

Galina Dimova Neykova-Sidorenko has submitted three publications, all of which are related to the subject of the dissertation.

Conclusion

The dissertation submitted for defence, entitled "Psychophysiological Assessment of Risks to Health and Work Capacity in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises," fully complies with the requirements of the Medical University of Varna.

It represents a significant scientific contribution to public health, with indisputable theoretical and practical implications. The topic is particularly timely and relevant, the candidate demonstrates an extensive knowledge of the relevant literature, and the overall aim and research objectives are formulated clearly and competently.

The results provide a substantial body of scientific information, comprising analytically presented findings, skilfully interpreted evidence, and practically oriented recommendations. The proposed algorithm, conclusions, and recommendations are sound and appropriate in light of the results obtained.

I hereby express my unequivocally positive assessment of the dissertation and recommend that the other esteemed members of the Scientific Jury vote in favour of awarding Galina Dimova Neykova-Sidorenko the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) in the scientific specialty Hygiene.

26 October 2026

Prof. Darina Naydenova Hristova, MD, PhD

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