

To the Chair of the
Scientific Jury
announced by Order No. P-109-499/02.12.2025
of the Rector of MU-Varna

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Dimitrov Gospodinov, MD

**Associate Professor of Cardiology at the Department of Cardiology, Pulmonology, and
Endocrinology, Medical University of Pleven**

elected as a member of the Scientific Jury (Minutes No. 1 /04.12.2025) based on a decision of the Academic Council of MU - Varna and in accordance with Order No. P-109-499/ 02.12.2025 of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna, I am appointed to prepare an opinion on a dissertation and abstract on the topic:

Re: Dissertation on the topic: "Vascular effects of biological and target-specific therapy in patients with rheumatoid arthritis" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Internal Medicine" by Dr. Georgi Alexandrov Gerganov, doctoral student at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine" at MU-Varna

Supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Maria Dimova-Mileva, MD, PhD, and Assoc. Prof. Tsvetoslav Georgiev, MD.

I have reviewed the materials provided to me and have not found any plagiarism. I have no conflict of interest with the author.

I. Presentation of the doctoral student:

Dr. GEORGI ALEXANDROV GERGANOV was born on April 15, 1986. He graduated from Medical University-Sofia in 2011. He specialized in rheumatology at the Rheumatology Clinic at St. Marina University Hospital in Varna from June 2014 to May 2019, where he successfully completed his specialization. From September 2016 to the present, he has been a lecturer in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases at Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University, Varna. The doctoral student is enrolled in a full-time doctoral program at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Maria Dimova-Mileva, MD, Head of the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases at MU-Varna.

II. Relevance and significance of the dissertation.

This work is particularly relevant and contemporary from both a scientific and practical point of view. Advances in the understanding and treatment of rheumatoid arthritis have significantly improved the quality of life of affected patients and led to a significant delay in the known consequences of the disease.

The presented dissertation is devoted to a problem concerning the carefully studied disease-modifying factors, specific diagnostic tools, and different types of treatment determining the prognosis, which are subject to dynamics.

III. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of 149 printed pages. It is structured in accordance with the requirements for this type of scientific work. The dissertation is illustrated with 28 figures and 63 tables. The list of cited literature sources contains 521 titles in Latin, 3 of which are by Bulgarian authors. It is presented in a format that is customary for this type of scientific work, the so-called Vancouver style. It is impressive that the author is familiar with Bulgarian publications related to the topic.

The topic of the dissertation is very important, topical, and significant in the fields of rheumatology and internal medicine.

The aim of this dissertation is to compare the indicators of echographically measured arterial stiffness, ADMA levels, and lipid parameters in patients in three groups: patients with rheumatoid arthritis treated with the TNF inhibitor adalimumab, patients treated with the JAK inhibitor

The presented literature review is comprehensive and provides the necessary basis for the development of scientific research. The literature review demonstrates Dr. Gerganov's detailed and in-depth knowledge of the factors, diagnosis, staging, classification, and treatment of the disease. Based on the comprehensive contemporary information available to the author, he also makes a comparative analysis with the data established in the study. upadacitinib, and a control group of healthy individuals.

Clinical material: 79 patients were analyzed, and 30 healthy volunteers were included in the control group. After signing an informed consent form, all patients underwent medical history taking, self-assessment scales for disease activity and pain, and thorough joint status examination. Three blood samples were taken—one EDTA sample for blood count and ESR testing and two for serology, with the first used to test CRP, creatinine, AST, ALT, and lipid profile (total cholesterol, triglycerides, HDL, LDL), and the second serum for ADMA testing. Based on the tests, examination, and activity scales, disease activity indices were calculated – DAS28-ESR, DAS28-CRP, CDAI, and the Framingham Risk

Score for cardiovascular risk. Blood pressure was measured, carotid artery ultrasound was performed, and arterial stiffness indicators were measured. Patients were divided into two groups: patients treated with a TNF inhibitor and patients treated with the JAK inhibitor upadacitinib.

In the discussion, the author compares his results with those of major international studies, which further reinforces their significance.

The study is comprehensive in terms of the object and subject studied. Summarizing the results of Dr. Gerganov's dissertation, the following conclusions can be drawn.

This is an original work by the author on a topic that can shed additional light on the effects of treating patients with rheumatoid arthritis with biological and targeted synthetic therapy.

Conclusions: The author formulates five clear conclusions that systematically summarize the detailed study and provide answers to the questions posed.

Contributions: Twelve specific contributions of the dissertation are presented, two of a methodological nature, six of a scientific-theoretical nature, and four of a scientific-applied nature, which I consider to be of significant clinical importance.

Dr. Gerganov complied with the recommendations of his colleagues during the approval of his dissertation and corrected the identified shortcomings.

IV. Assessment of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

Dr. Georgi Gerganov has published three articles in Bulgarian journals and three in foreign journals cited in Scopus and Web of Science.

In conclusion:

Dr. Georgi Gerganov is a well-prepared colleague, rheumatologist, and lecturer with extensive clinical and academic experience. I express my positive assessment of the dissertation and consider that it meets the criteria of the Academic Council of MU-Varna for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor." This gives me reason to vote in favor of awarding the degree of "Doctor" to Dr. Georgi A. Gerganov, a doctoral student in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases at MU-Varna.

20.01.2026

Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Gospodinov, MD

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