

TO
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY
- Prof. Dr. Krasimir Ivanov, Appointed
by Order of the Rector of
the Medical University of Varna
No. R-109-71/28.01.2026

STATEMENT

by

PROF. ZHASMINA MIHAYLOVA MILANOVA, DM

**HEAD OF THE CLINIC OF MEDICAL ONCOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF
HEMATOLOGY, ONCOLOGY, PATHOLOGY AND RADIOBIOLOGY, MMA, SOFIA**

Regarding: Competition for the academic position of "Professor" code by field of higher education 7. Health and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine and specialty "Oncology", one position for the needs of the Department of "Oncology", Faculty of Medicine - 1 full-time position and 0.5 full-time position for the needs of the "Clinic of Medical Oncology" University Hospital "St. Marina" EAD Varna, announced by order of the Rector of MU Varna No. R-109-71/28.01.2026, published in the "State Gazette" No. 102/28.11.2025 and Decision under Protocol 52/12.01.2026 of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine.

The statement was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (LAADRB), the Regulations for its Implementation (PPLAADRB) and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University - Varna.

Only one candidate was admitted to the competition - Assoc. Prof. Eleonora Georgieva Dimitrova - Gospodinova, MD, Assoc. Prof. at the Clinic of Medical Oncology of the University Hospital "St. Marina" EAD Varna and Head of the Department of Oncology, Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

Brief biographical data

Assoc. Prof. Eleonora Georgieva Dimitrova - Gospodinova was born on 09.03.1972, Varna and graduated from the Medical University of Varna in 1996. She has three specialties - internal medicine, pneumology and phthisiology and oncology, which she took consecutively in 2002, 2004, and 2008. She initially worked since 1997 at the Clinic of Pneumology and Phthisiology

of the , MHAT "St. Marina" - EAD, and since 2008 she has been a doctor at the Clinic of Medical Oncology of the same hospital.

From 2014 to 2017 she is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine", specialty "Oncology", Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna with a dissertation on the topic "Expression of Beclin-1 as a marker for autophagy and its prognostic and predictive value in patients with metastatic colon cancer".

In 2018, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova habilitated as an associate professor at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine, and in 2019 she was the Head of the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine, and from 2020 - until now she is the Head of the Department of Oncology, Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

Research activity

In the current competition, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova is presented with a total of 23, reflecting the scientific and research activities of the candidate in the period 2019 - 2025. The distribution of scientific works is as follows - Dissertation - "The expression of Beclin 1 as a marker for autophagy and its prognostic and predictive value in patients with colon carcinoma in the metastatic stage", MU- Varna, 2017., Habilitation work -

"Personalized approach to patients with colorectal cancer", MU- Varna, 2025., Monograph - "Colorectal cancer", MU- Varna, 2018. Publications in journals and collections - 21 pcs. In Bulgarian - 8 pcs. and in a foreign language (English) - 14 pcs. As an independent author in 4 pcs. of the publications and in co-authorship - 17 pcs., of which as the first author - in 1 publication;

The scientometric indicators carry the following points by indicators, as follows for indicator A1/50/ + indicator D7 / 86.70 points/ + indicator D8 / 161 points/ + indicator D10 – D12 (1695) + B3 monograph /100/ = 2092.7 points

The presented scientometric indicators of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova fully cover and exceed the national minimum and requirements for holding the academic position of "Professor".

The scientific contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova can be arranged as follows:

1. COLORECTAL CARCINOMA DIRECTION

The conducted retrospective non-interventional single-center study described in the dissertation is the first to evaluate the relationship between an autophagy marker (Beclin-1) and the pre-treatment level of SUVmax in liver metastases. For the first time in the available world literature, a relationship between Beclin-1 expression and SUVmax values is reported,

which contributes to a better understanding of the biology of a given tumor and provides an opportunity for a more aggressive therapeutic approach.

The monograph "Personalized approach in patients with colorectal cancer" presents current data on the epidemiology of the disease and modern understanding of tumor biology with an emphasis on basic pathogenetic mechanisms and characteristics of the tumor microenvironment, which are of key importance in the choice of therapeutic strategy, as well as determining the expected clinical results.

Three of the publications advocate a retrospective study of KRAS status on tumor tissue in a Bulgarian population of patients with CRC, a study of serum levels of HMGB1 - High mobility group box 1 as a predictive factor for response to radiochemotherapy, as well as a review article on the application of immunotherapy in colorectal cancer.

DIRECTION 2: LUNG CANCER

Two of the three publications in this area are related to the first retrospective analysis in the country of the impact of the burden of travel to the place of treatment (measured as distance or travel time) on the clinical outcomes in the treatment of patients with lung cancer. Data for 9240 patients treated at the Plovdiv Cancer Center during the period 2005 - 2020 were analyzed. The study shows a statistically significant difference in overall survival between the individual subgroups of patients stratified according to the burden of travel to the oncology center, which raises questions related to the access of patients with oncological diseases to specialized treatment centers.

DIRECTION 3: BREAST CARCINOMA

Three of the four publications in this direction are related to the evaluation of the mutation in the PIK3CA gene in patients with HR+/HER2 – negative BCC, an assessment of its frequency in the Bulgarian population, the importance as a prognostic and predictive factor

DIRECTION 4: MODERN THERAPEUTIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLID TUMORS WITH DIFFERENT LOCALIZATIONS

The four review articles in this direction are related to a detailed examination of the new therapeutic options for drug antitumor treatment of patients with prostate carcinoma, breast carcinoma, non-small cell lung carcinoma and colorectal carcinoma.

DIRECTION 5: GENETICS AND ONCOLOGY

All four articles in this area address different aspects of diagnosis, treatment, and ethical and psychological issues related to Hereditary Tumor Predisposition Syndromes (HTPSs) - The articles present their own experience in genetic counseling in one center in Bulgaria, including 123 patients who have considered or undergone genetic testing, divided into groups by gender, age, type of referral, and indications for testing. A five-year retrospective analysis of genetic consultations for hereditary cancer syndromes performed in a single center in Bulgaria was conducted to assess and systematize the demographic and epidemiological characteristics of patients, the genetic tests used, and the spectrum of identified changes. The most common conditions identified were hereditary breast and ovarian cancer syndrome and Lynch syndrome, correlating with changes in the BRACA1, MSH2, PALB2, STK11 genes. These findings highlight the need for better awareness, financial access to research, and the establishment of systematic screening programs. Identification of changes in genes associated with genetic tumor risk syndromes (GTRSs) is essential for early diagnosis, risk assessment and personalized treatment selection

LINE 6: OTHER, INCLUDING CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

The five publications in this line reflect the following

- **Prostate cancer**- Positron emission tomography with 68 Ga – PSMA – 11 is an established imaging method for staging prostate cancer. The publication describes data from 3.5 – 4 – year follow-up of patients, as the study raises the problem of careful interpretation of the results when making decisions about subsequent therapeutic behavior due to the high sensitivity, but also the lower specificity of the method.
- **Breast cancer** - locally advanced stage - neoadjuvant chemotherapy This prospective, multicenter study aimed to determine whether the level of resilience and distress in breast cancer patients before the start of neoadjuvant treatment can be measured by time estimation. The study included 104 women. Time estimation was measured by comparing real-time time with the participants' subjective prospective assessment of how quickly one minute passed. The NCCN Distress Thermometer was used to assess distress, and resilience was measured by the Connor–Davidson Res – Varnailience Scale (CD–RISC), a 10-point self-rated unidimensional scale.
- **Clinical cases** – first “Metastatic morpheaform basal cell carcinoma – clinical case” – Dimitrova –
- **Clinical cases** – second “Immune-mediated eosinophilic fasciitis in a patient with metastatic malignant melanoma – and impaired quality of life.

□ **Maxillofacial pathology** - The data presented are from a prospective study of 24 patients from the Clinic of Maxillofacial Surgery of the University Hospital "St. Marina" –Varna. In the 13 patients with evidence of osteonecrosis and 11 without, levels of a number of biomarkers related to bone metabolism – vitamin D, osteocalcin, C-terminal telopeptide of mature collagen type I (CTX) – were examined in the study. The study found a relationship between the levels of some biomarkers of bone metabolism and the risk of developing osteonecrosis.

Teaching activities

Assoc. Prof. Eleonora Dimitrova-Gospodinova has a teaching workload of 176 for 2020/2021, which is increasing progressively, reaching 532 hours for the academic year 2024/2025. As head of the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova-Gospodinova regularly participates in the training of intern doctors majoring in Medicine within the framework of a pre-graduate internship in internal medicine.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has four graduates of her studies in medical oncology.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has 11 doctoral students in independent or full-time study, five of whom have defended their PhD.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has over 15 years of teaching experience.

The submitted report on the teaching and teaching workload of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova fully meets the requirements for AD "Professor".

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the scientific publication and taking into account her professional qualities as a specialist, teacher, researcher and colleague, I strongly recommend that the esteemed scientific jury vote positively for the election of Assoc. Prof. Eleonora Georgieva Dimitrova-Gospodinova to the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Oncology".

Prof. Zhasmina Mihaylova, MD

23.02.2026

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