

STATEMENT

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**member of the Scientific Jury according to Order № P-109-166 / 14.04.2022. of the
Rector of the Medical University - Varna**

Subject: Competition for the academic position of "**Associate Professor**" in the field of higher education "7. Healthcare and sports ", professional field" 7.1. Medicine ", majoring in" Eye Diseases" for the needs of the Educational Sector "Medical Optician", Medical College - Varna at the Medical University - Varna, published in the State Gazette No. 14 of 18.02.2022.

One participant only in the announced competition - Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dimitar Ivanov Grupchev, Ph.D. - Head of the Educational sector "Medical Optician" at the Medical College, Medical University - Varna.

The candidate has submitted precisely all the necessary documents for participation in the competition, meeting the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of Medical University - Varna.

According to Protocol №1 from 29.04.2022 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I have been appointed to prepare a statement on the procedure regarding the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Career profile of the candidate

Dimitar Grupchev obtained a Master's degree in Medicine at the Medical University of Varna in 2016. In 2018 Dr. Grupchev upgrades his education and qualification with a second Master's degree in Healthcare Management, MU - Varna. From January 2021 the candidate covered the standards to be "specialist in ophthalmology". In the same year, after successfully passing the exam, he received a European recognized specialty and the title FEBO (Fellow of the European Board of Ophthalmology).

In the period 2017-2020 the candidate was a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at the Medical University – Varna. In 2021, Dr. Grupchev successfully defended his dissertation on "Cellular and tissue therapy of the anterior ocular surface - opportunities and prospects" and obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in "Medicine"(ophthalmology).

Dr. Dimitar Grupchev started his academic career in 2017 as an assistant in the Educational sector "Medical Optician" at the Medical College, MU - Varna, and from 2021 took a position of a chief assistant professor in the same sector. He has been the head of the Educational sector since 2018.

The courses and specializations conducted, both locally and abroad, further contribute to his professional development and transforming him into a well-prepared and modern-minded professional, practitioner, teacher and researcher.

He is a member of professional and scientific Bulgarian and international organizations, including: Bulgarian Society of Ophthalmology; Union of Scientists in Bulgaria; Bulgarian Medical Association; European Board of Ophthalmology; European Cataract and Refractive Surgery Association and European Retina Association. During the period 2017-2021 he has been a member of the World Association for Research and Vision in Ophthalmology (ARVO). He is fluent in English, Russian and French in his professional and research activities.

General characteristics of the research and applied research activities of the candidate

The publications and references presented to the current application prove the high quality and recognizability of the scientific production of the candidate on an international scale.

Dr. Grupchev's production covers all requirements, however in some areas his achievements are significantly higher than the minimum requirements of the MU - Varna. A total of 22 scientific papers have been submitted, and those include: 19 journal publications, monography and additional publications adding more points. This is a fulfillment of the minimum requirements for taking the aforementioned academic position "Associate Professor", according to Art. ZRASRB from 2018.

The scientific papers presented, were published in the period 2012 – 2022, and are as follows:

- 1 monography - "Evolution of visualization in ophthalmic surgery", 2022;
- 5 publications in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-established databases with scientific information;
- 13 publications in journals with scientific review;
- 3 publications, outside the evidence for fulfillment of the minimum requirements.

Five of the attached scientific papers have been published in Bulgarian, and seventeen are in English. All publications are correctly described and attached in full in electronic format to the materials.

In addition, the applicant provides information on 3 more full-text publications that are not subject for current review, because they are related to previous applications.

Dr. Grupchev's active participation in scientific forums also contributes to the good visibility of his scientific work. There is evidence for 18 participations in scientific forums, 11 of which are international.

The works have been published in renowned scientific journals abroad and in Bulgaria, such as: *Contact Lens & Anterior Eye; Ocular Surface; Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science; International Journal of Innovative Trends in Engineering; Turkiya Klinikleri Journal of Ophthalmology; Bulgarian Review of Ophthalmology; Glaucoma; Scripta Scientifica Medica; GPNews; Journal of the Bulgarian scientists (Section Medicine and Ecology), Varna medical forum.*

The research activity and the scientific contributions of Dr. Grupchev are in the field of scientific specialty of the application. They can be grouped in the following thematic areas:

1. Vitreo-retinal surgery - clinical and social aspects;
2. Vision and quality of life;
3. Modification of corneal healing and regeneration;
4. Amniotic membrane transplantation;
5. Corneal and stem cell transplantation;
6. "Eye banking".

The candidate's scientific output demonstrates competence in the research areas and reflects his professional training, practical experience, interests and dedication in research.

As an outstanding characteristic of the scientific works I emphasize the punctuality, innovative ideas, added scientific value and the potential for practical applicability of the scientific results. The scientific contributions are predominantly original in nature - with cognitive and practical-applied significance at the national and international level.

Evidence of the high quality of the publications and their reflection in the Bulgarian and international scientific literature is presented. The candidate has submitted a reference from the library of MU - Varna for six citations - four of which in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-established databases of scientific information, one - in monographs and one in volume of scientific works, which is indicative of the relevance of the subject and the recognizability of the candidate from the scientific community.

Undisputed confirmation of the international recognition and quality of the scientific work is also the high impact factor and h-index: IF = 23,489 and h-index = 3.

Dr. Dimitar Grupchev has scientific profiles in ORCID; Google Scholar; SCOPUS and Research Gate.

Information about the participation of Dr. Grupchev in six research projects is also provided. The candidate works actively and supports the scientific activity of students and postgraduates. Participates in national and international scientific forums in the field of his interests.

Evaluation of the teaching activity of the candidate

Dr. Dimitar Grupchev has nearly 6 years of experience in eye care and 5 years and 3 months of teaching experience in the MU - Varna, which fully meets the regulatory requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor". Its teaching load is very high (average 412 hours per year for the last 5 years) and significantly exceeds the required standard for teaching employment at the institution.

The teaching activity of the candidate is in the field of his professional training and scientific interests. He participates in the teaching of four main disciplines in the curriculum of the specialty "Medical Optician" ("Eye Optics", "Optics and Optical Devices", "Technology of Optical Production" and "Contact Lenses") and leads internships in the specialty.

Participates in the teaching of the discipline "Eye Diseases" to medical students (including English language training) and the specialty "Nurse". Participates actively in the development

and updating of educational documentation of these disciplines (curricula, etc.), as well as in the preparation of teaching materials for them.

The candidate has passed a large number of specialized courses for continuing education, increasing his qualification in the specialty, both at the Medical University - Varna and internationally. The presented report shows that Dr. Dimitar Grupchev covers and in some groups of indicators significantly exceeds the scientometric requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" according to the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of MU - Varna (Table 1).

Table 1. Compliance with the scientometric requirements of MU - Varna for the academic position of "Associate Professor"

Requirements (by group)	Points required	Points of the candidate based on his application
A	50	50
V	100	100
G	200 (≥ 60 from G 7)	205,75 (87 from G7)
D	50	75

Conclusion

The candidate fully meets the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the Medical University - Varna for the academic position "Associate Professor".

Dr. Dimitar Grupchev has built an appropriate career profile with an eagerness for development and high potential for further clinical, educational and scientific improvements. The candidate provides up-to-date, original, valuable and sufficient in volume scientific production with innovative ideas and potential for practical applicability. He has teaching, research, organizational and administrative experience.

The overall assessment of professional development, scientific performances and contributions, teaching activity, work with students and young researchers and administrative experience give me reason to give a positive opinion and confidently suggest to the members of the Scientific Jury to support Dr. Dimitar Ivanov Grupchev, Ph.D. for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education "7. Healthcare and sports", professional field "7.1. Medicine", majoring in "Eye Diseases" for Educational sector "Medical Optician" at the Medical College at the Medical University - Varna.

06.06.22
Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury:

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