

OPINION

of

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Stefanov Karastatev, Ph.D.

Member of the scientific jury according to order № P-109-236/01.06.2022 of the Rector of MU - Varna on the procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" with candidate Dr. Svetoslav Pavlov Dimitrov

The dissertation on the topic of "**Determinants of quality of life in patients with non-radiographic axial spondyloarthritis nr-ax SpA: an analysis based on the main aspects of the disease**" is a systematic prospective study of an interesting group of patients with nr-ax SpA. The author has tried to define three arms of the study – an imaging arm, a clinical arm and a control group. The definition of these arms is due to excellent knowledge of the classification criteria for the types of spondyloarthritis and the need for their application in Bulgarian patients at a relatively young age.

The author precisely formulates the set tasks, and in addition to the assessment of the disease activity, the originality in the research is also the assessment of the quality of life. Well-established and accessible markers have been used to assess the degree of damage to the axial skeleton, disease activity, physical function and others. All this allows for comparison in the three formed groups, achieved with accessible statistical methods.

Dr. Dimitrov's dissertation and the results obtained give a new look at nr-ax SpA, which will support the clinical thinking of the rheumatologist in an outpatient setting and early diagnosis. In this regard, the algorithm proposed by the author for the diagnosis of nr-ax SpA is another original element in the dissertation.

The author defines eight conclusions, for the first time assessing the quality of life in such a group of patients. There is no significant difference between the patients in the imaging group and the patients in the clinical arm, which means that the treatment and the rehabilitation approach must be the same.

The publications related to the dissertation and participation in scientific forums are sufficient and present the long-term work and experience of the author, the supervisor and the staff of the Clinic of Rheumatology at the University Hospital "St. Marina" - Varna. Dr. Dimitrov's vision of future additions to the results achieved so far makes a good impression.

I am fully convinced that the dissertation presented by Dr. Dimitrov meets all the requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**".

I believe that what has been said so far will be shared by the other members of the esteemed scientific jury.

June 30, 2022.


Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Karastatev