

Review

by Prof. D-r Vihra Krumova Milanova, PhD, DSc

Regarding: Competition for the acquisition of the academic position "docent" in the specialty "Psychiatry", professional direction 7.1. "Medicine", field of higher education 7. "Health care and sports" - one, 0.5 full-time position for the Department of "Psychiatry and Medical Psychology", Faculty of Medicine and 1 full-time position for the Second Psychiatric Clinic at UMBAL "St. Marina" EAD-Varna in connection with an advertisement published in State Gazette No. 28 /28.03.2023 with a single candidate Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD from the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, MU-Varna and Second Psychiatric Clinic at UMBAL "St. Marina" EAD-Varna.

According to order No. R-109-267/25.05.2023. of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna, on the basis of art. 4, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), art. 57, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Implementing Regulations of ZRASRB, art. 6, para. 1, art. 127, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff in MU-Varna and decision according to protocol No. 02/04.05.2023. of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine and protocol No. 1/07.06.2023. from a meeting of the scientific jury.

The documents presented by Dr. Zhivko Apostolov are in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff and the Regulations of the MU, Varna for its implementation and have been approved by the Admissions Committee.

Biographical data:

Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD was born on June 7, 1986. Graduated from higher education (Master of Medicine) in 2010. at Medical University-Varna. Since 2011 until 2013 is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the MU-Varna. In 2014 after defending his thesis "On some changes in brain asymmetry in schizophrenia" at the University of Varna, he obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Psychiatry". Since 2016 has acquired the specialty "Psychiatry". Honorary lecturer at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology - MU-Varna in the period 2016/2018. Assistant since 2018. until 2019 He is currently the main assistant at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology-MU-Varna and the Second Psychiatric Clinic. Member of: Bulgarian Medical Union, Bulgarian Psychiatric Association, Royal College of Psychiatrists. Fluent in written and spoken English Teaches psychiatry and medical psychology to English-speaking students. Since 2012 until now he works in the Second Psychiatric Clinic at the "St. Marina" - Varna. In the period 2017-2021 is also an outpatient psychiatrist at the DKC "St. Marina" - Varna.

Research activity:

Dr. Zhivko Apostolov participated in the competition with: Dissertation work for the award of ONS "Doctor", Habilitation work - monograph, Scientific publications in journals with/without SJR and/or IF and collections - 15, Chapters in University textbooks - 1 co-authored, Participation in scientific forums – 7, Number of citations reflecting scientific activity – 11.

Of the full-text scientific publications in journals - 4 are in English, 11 in Bulgarian. Dr. Zhivko Apostolov is the independent author of 5 of them; first author in 6 and fourth in 2.

Scientific works are divided into the following topics: Schizophrenia, Evolutionary Psychiatry, Philosophy and Psychiatry, Depression and Anxiety Disorders, Brain Asymmetry.

In Publications D.7.1; D.8.2; D.8.3; D.8.4; D.8.9 examined changes in prescribing patterns of antipsychotics and other psychotropic drugs for first-episode schizophrenia between 2005, when the main second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs) were commercialized in Bulgaria (although their prescribing was influenced by previous policies to resolve) and 2015 when generic versions of the core SGAs were already available. Possibilities for psychotherapeutic interventions in the treatment of schizophrenia are also discussed. A brief overview of the latest, as well as some future, pharmacotherapeutic options in the treatment of schizophrenia is useful.

In his monograph, the candidate highlights the evolutionary role of social cognition and the social brain in the emergence of psychopathology. Evolutionary theories related to most mental illnesses are examined, with a primary focus on schizophrenia.

Publication D.7.2 is a brief overview of embodied cognition, which in various ways rejects or reformulates the computational nature of cognitive science, emphasizing the importance of the physical body in cognitive abilities. Unifying for researchers of embodied cognition is the idea that the body, or the body's interactions with the environment, constitute or contribute to cognition in ways that require a new framework for its study. The brain is not just a computer and it is not an independent center of cognition. These theoretical and empirical developments portend implications for the study and treatment of schizophrenia. Some of the most difficult philosophical questions arising within embodied cognition, such as those concerning the representation, explanation, and very meaning of "mind," are of the kind that any theory of mind must address. Whatever the future of embodied cognition, careful study of its goals, methods, conceptual foundations, and motivations will undoubtedly enrich the philosophy of psychology.

Publications D.8.5; D.8.6; D.8.7; D.8.8; D.8.11; D.8.12 are about Depression and Anxiety Disorders. The methods of personalized medicine in the treatment of depressive disorders are presented. The possible relationship between mitral valve prolapse and panic disorder is discussed. Improving the identification of depression and other mental disorders and ensuring that affected patients with diabetes have access to follow-up treatments such as psychotherapy or pharmacotherapy can lead to better quality of life, improved diabetes management and better clinical outcomes. The main therapeutic challenges in the treatment of anxiety disorders during pregnancy and lactation are described.

The dissertation work on the topic "On some changes in brain asymmetry in schizophrenia" attempts to reveal deficits in lateralized cognitive functions in patients with schizophrenia, the frequency of non-right-handedness (left-handedness) among patients with schizophrenia was investigated and compared with that in the Bulgarian population. Based on the models of indirect associative memory and pseudoneglect, the assumptions that left-hemispheric and right-hemispheric dysfunction coexist in schizophrenia have been confirmed. Based on an analysis of the 2P:4P finger ratio, the likelihood that prenatal testosterone predisposes to depressive and anxiety symptoms—emotional dimensions that are associated with the right hemisphere—is shown. It has been suggested that in individuals with different types of manual dominance, specifically left-handed and right-handed, the connections between brain asymmetry and schizophrenia may be presented in a different way. Hypothetical projections of brain asymmetry in the diathesis-stress model of schizophrenia are proposed.

Over the years, Dr. Apostolov emerged as a specialist with interests in the field of schizophrenia, both in its clinical and practical aspects, as well as in research.

I would recommend that he continue his publication activity with an emphasis on articles in journals with an impact factor.

Teaching activity:

The teaching activity of Dr. Apostolov is related to the training of medical and dental students. During the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 academic years, Dr. Apostolov was a part-time teacher at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Medical University of Varna, and in 2018/2019 - an assistant. From 2019 is a senior assistant at the department. He teaches psychiatry and medical psychology to English- and Bulgarian-speaking students. The academic load exceeds the requirements according to the standard. Dr. Apostolov's educational activity also includes participation in study guides.

Therapeutic and diagnostic activity:

Dr. Zhivko Apostolov has over 10 years of experience in the field of psychiatry, having started as a full-time doctoral student and continued as a doctor at the Second Psychiatric Clinic of UMBAL "St. Marina". In the period 2017-2021 also has accumulated experience as an outpatient psychiatrist at the DCC "St. Marina" - Varna. He successfully applies the biopsychosocial model in his practice: modern psychopharmacological means, psychotherapeutic approaches, rehabilitation methods. He is an established specialist with extensive clinical and diagnostic experience and is respected by patients and their relatives.

Conclusion:

Dr. Zhivko Apostolov has a sufficient volume of professional experience, publications and teaching activities, which should be evaluated by the scientific jury. The materials submitted for the competition show that Dr. Apostolov meets all the requirements for the occupation of the academic position of "associate professor", according to the Recommended Criteria of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in

the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical university - Varna.

Taking into account the professional development and scientific performances of the candidate, I give my positive assessment for his election as "associate professor" and I strongly recommend the members of the Scientific Jury to award Dr. Zhivko Pavlinov Apostlov, MD, the academic position of "associate professor" in a scientific specialty "Psychiatry", professional direction 7.1. "Medicine", field of higher education 7. "Health care and sports" for the Department of "Psychiatry and Medical Psychology", Faculty of Medicine-MU-Varna and Second Psychiatric Clinic at UMBAL "St. Marina "EAD-Varna.

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Prepared the review:



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