

STATEMENT

By Prof. Dr. Mariana Dimitrova Arnaudova-Zhekova, MD, PhD
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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.

Regarding: participation in a competition for the acquisition of the academic position "**associate professor**" 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 UMHAT "St. Marina" EAD-Varna in connection with an advertisement published in State Gazette No. 28 / 28.03.2023.

One candidate submitted documents within the legal deadline: **Chief Assistant Professor Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, MD, PhD** at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, MU-Varna and Second Psychiatric Clinic at UMHAT "St. Marina" EAD-Varna.

Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, MD, PhD was born on June 7, 1986. Graduated from university (Master of Medicine) in 2010 at Medical University-Varna. In 2014, after defending a PhD dissertation work "On some changes in brain asymmetry in schizophrenia" at the Medical University of Varna, he obtained a Doctorate in the scientific specialty of Psychiatry. Since 2016 has acquired the specialty of "Psychiatry". Honorary lecturer at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology - MU-Varna in the period 2018/2019. Assistant since 2019. He is currently Chief Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology-MU-Varna and the Second Psychiatric Clinic.

Member of:

- Bulgarian Medical Association
- Bulgarian Psychiatric Association

Fluent in written and spoken English

He teaches psychiatry and medical psychology to English-speaking students.

The academic load exceeds the requirements according to the standard.

The candidate has active scientific profiles in:

SCOPUS, ORCID, Google Scholar, Research Gate, etc.

Evaluation of research activity

The candidate submits a report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the rules of MU-Varna, prepared in the Library of MU-Varna, based on information provided by the candidate and the automated information from international scientific databases. According to the submitted certificate, **Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, MD,**

PhD, meets the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the regulations of Medical University -Varna for holding the academic position of "associate professor".

The overall scientific activity of **Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, PhD, MD**, for the period 2014-2022, provided by him and the official reference, includes:

- PhD Dissertation work
- 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.

For reference in this competition are:

- PhD Dissertation work "On some changes of brain asymmetry in schizophrenia", MU-Varna, 2014
- Habilitation thesis-monograph: "Evolutionary psychiatry, A different view of schizophrenia and psychopathology". Varna, 2018
- Full Text Publications published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-databases of scientific information -**2**
- Publications and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes-**12**.
- Participation in scientific forums - **6**
- Citations, reflecting the scientific activity of the candidate-**11**

The scientific interests of the candidate's research work are related to the areas: Schizophrenia, Evolutionary Psychiatry and Brain Asymmetry.

The main directions of scientific works are in the fields of:

Schizophrenia

Evolutionary psychiatry

Philosophy and psychiatry

Depression and anxiety disorders

Brain asymmetry

1. Schizophrenia (D.7.1; D.8.2; D.8.3; D.8.4; D.8.9). A series of 3 reviews and 2 self-reported articles (D.7.1; D8.9) respectively discuss changes in prescribing patterns of antipsychotics and other psychotropic drugs for first-episode schizophrenia between 2005 and 2015 period of introduction of the main SGAs and their generic versions available; a clinical case discussing differential-diagnostic problems between schizophrenia and a form of encephalitis; new and future pharmacotherapeutic options in schizophrenia; the possibilities of psychotherapeutic interventions in the treatment of schizophrenia.

2. Evolutionary Psychiatry (C.3. Monograph; Publication D.8.1). In the habilitation thesis "Evolutionary Psychiatry, A Different Look at Schizophrenia and Psychopathology", the author notes that about half (55%) of the coding genes in the human genome are expressed in the brain, making it a prime target for mutations and evolutionary changes. Dr. Apostolov emphasizes highlighting the evolutionary role of social cognition and the social brain for the emergence of psychopathology. Psychopathological symptoms are maladaptive and dysfunctional because of their abnormal frequency, intensity, or inconsistency with the current situation. The monograph examines evolutionary theories relevant to most mental illnesses,

with a primary focus on schizophrenia. A brief overview of the latest, as well as some future, pharmacotherapeutic options in the treatment of schizophrenia is given.

In the article (D8.1) Schizophrenia - an evolutionary perspective, the author discusses these views in the same spirit and shares his own data from his dissertation work in this direction.

3. Philosophy and Psychiatry (Publication D.7.2). The presented review discusses philosophical issues regarding embodied cognition and the importance of the physical body in cognitive abilities and its interaction with the environment. The concept of impaired embodied cognition offers new treatment strategies through psychotherapy and body-centered interventions and may eventually offer biomarkers for diagnosis.

4. Depression and Anxiety Disorders (Publications D.8.5; D.8.6; D.8.7; D.8.8; D.8.11; D.8.12). In the reviews presented, problems of practical importance in clinical practice are discussed, such as: the methods of personalized medicine in the treatment of depressive disorders; the possible relationship between mitral valve prolapse and panic disorder; improving the identification of depression and other mental disorders in patients with diabetes and ensuring adequate, complex treatment; the main therapeutic challenges in the treatment of anxiety disorders during pregnancy and lactation, the relationship between irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression.

5. Brain asymmetry (A.1. Dissertation work). In the PhD thesis with topic "On some changes in brain asymmetry in schizophrenia", the author emphasized that for the first time in our country an attempt was made 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. The assumptions that left-hemispheric and right-hemispheric dysfunction coexist in schizophrenia were confirmed. Hypothetical projections of brain asymmetry in the diathesis-stress model for schizophrenia were proposed.

The academic reference includes a full-text publication beyond the minimum scientometric requirements for the appointment of AP "Associate Professor", in which the simultaneous use of some first- and second-generation antipsychotic drugs in patients with various types of cancer is discussed in the form of an overview as a possibly new therapeutic option.

From the presented information about the research activity of Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, MD, PhD, his scientific interests and in-depth theoretical knowledge in them are outlined. He works purposefully and actively to improve his professional qualification. I would recommend that he continues his scientific activity in the direction of accumulating his own data, which he can compare and interpret with those in the scientific literature.

Conclusion

Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, MD, PhD is a responsible teacher, good clinician and researcher. Its indicators for scientific research, teaching and clinical activity meet the requirements of 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 University of Medicine - Varna.

In conclusion, everything stated so far, gives me the reason to give a positive opinion and to propose to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the awarding of the academic position "**associate professor**", professional direction 7.1. "Medicine", field of higher education 7. "Health care and sport" for the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine-MU-Varna and the Second Psychiatric Clinic at the UMHAT "St. Marina"- Varna to **Zhivko Pavlinov Apostolov, MD, PhD**.

24 Jul 2023
Varna

Signature: 
/prof. Dr. Mariana Arnaudova, MD, PhD/