

STATEMENT

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Regarding the competition announced in SG (No. 83/03.10.2023) for the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine, scientific specialty "Oncology" for the needs of the "Oncology" department, Faculty of "Medicine" at MU-Varna.

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I. Introduction

The competition for professor of "Oncology" has been announced for the needs of the Department of Oncology, Faculty of Medicine at MU-Varna and Medical Oncology Clinic of UMHAT "St. Marina" - Varna. The candidate for the competition is Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, Associate Professor at the Department of Oncology. The review of the documents shows that the procedure for the creation and announcement of the competition has been followed. The competition documentation is informative, well-structured and prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application.

II. Biographical data

- Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, graduated from the University of Economics in Varna in 2002 as a Bachelor of Economics, Specialty in Commodities Science;
- In 2009, he graduated as a medical doctor at the Medical University of Varna, specialty in "Medicine";
- In 2010, Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, started working as a medical oncology fellow in the Clinic of Medical Oncology, UMHAT "St. Marina" - Varna;
- In 2015 acquires a "Medical Oncology" specialty;

- Since 2016, Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, is an oncologist at the Clinic of Medical Oncology, UMHAT "St. Marina";
- In 2018, after a successful competition, he was elected as the Head of the Clinic of Medical Oncology;
- Since 2019, he has been the head of the "Oncology Clinics Direction" at UMHAT "St. Marina";

Professional development at MU - Varna

- In 2013, Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, was appointed as a part-time assistant in the Department of Propedeutics of Internal Medicine at the Medical University of Varna, since 2017 he has been a full-time assistant at the Medical University of Varna, and since 2018 - chief assistant at the department;
- In 2016, he defended the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the scientific specialty "Oncology" on the topic: "Microribonucleic acids miR-17, miR-21, miR-29a and miR-92 as potential markers for assessing the risk of recurrence after adjuvant chemotherapy in patients with colon cancer";
- Since 2018, the only candidate in the current competition has been elected as an Associate Professor at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine;
- Since 2019, Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, is the head of the "Oncology and Rare Diseases" department at the Research Institute of the MU - Varna;
- Since 2020, he is an associate professor at the Department of Oncology;

III. Scientific work

A. General review of scientific work

In the current competition, Associate Professor Nikolay Conev participated with 57 full-text articles and scientific reports, 12 of which are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information and are equivalent to a monographic work. The candidate has 56 participations in international and national scientific congresses with the presentation of his research work. Associate Professor Nikolay Conev presents 749 citations or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes. From the issued academic reference, he has an impact factor - 1276.168.

B. Overview and assessment of scientific contributions

The scientific works of Associate Professor Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD are in several main areas:

1. *Papers in the field of molecular biology in oncology* - related to the study of small non-coding RNAs as prognostic and predictive markers in oncological patients; markers of therapeutic response in solid tumor immunotherapy; study of circulating histones as markers for monitoring oncological diseases; mechanisms related to apoptosis.

2. *Papers in the field of psycho-oncology* – The interest in screening for distress in cancer patients has grown significantly over the past decade. The author analyzes problems in understanding and implementing programs to identify it, e.g. measuring levels of distress among cancer patients with COVID-19 infection.

3. *Other works in the field of oncology* - covering a variety of topics - toxicity of antitumor drugs, assessment of access to facilities that offer oncology care and treatment outcomes. Analysis of strategies in different localizations of oncological diseases. For the first time in Bulgaria, a retrospective analysis of the effectiveness of drugs for the treatment of colorectal carcinoma beyond the second line has been conducted.

4. *Collaborative studies in radiotherapy* - studies identifying markers as potential predictors of response to radiotherapy; research on levels of distress among cancer patients undergoing radiation therapy.

5. *Developments in the field of pulmonology* - a new system was created, the so-called "time estimation" as a powerful ultrashort depression screening tool in COPD patients.

C. Important scientific achievements of Associate Professor Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD:

1. The dissertation was published in Bioscience trends and cited 45 times in international journals. Part of the scientific results of the study were presented at ESMO Copenhagen 2016.

- For the first time in Bulgaria, patients with colon cancer after radical surgical resection, who have undergone adjuvant chemotherapy in full volume, are being followed up. The aim is to identify new biomarkers with diagnostic significance for relapse up to one year after completion of adjuvant chemotherapy;

- For the first time worldwide, it is reported that the expression levels of miR-17, miR-21 and miR-92 in the group of Nx patients are statistically significant and can be considered as a non-invasive diagnostic biomarker for relapse after adjuvant chemotherapy in patients with colon cancer;

- For the first time in the world, a multimarker (miR-17, miR21, miR-29a and miR-92) is constructed, which with statistical significance differentiates non-relapsed from relapsed patients after radical surgery and full adjuvant chemotherapy.

2. Scientific articles :

- For the first time, the distribution of the allelic and genotypic frequencies of SNPs in the Bulgarian population was studied in healthy individuals, as well as in patients with CRC;

- A test using subjective time assessment was created equivalent to The National Comprehensive Cancer Network Distress Thermometer (DT), Problem List (PL). This test is easy to perform, time-saving, non-intrusive and ultra-short screening tool, suitable even for patients who do not wish to reveal their emotional state through direct questionnaires;

- For the first time in national clinical oncology, a comprehensive and complex analysis of patients with lung cancer was performed, focused on proving the role of distance and travel time to the cancer center as prognostic factors.

- For the first time in Bulgaria, correlations between clinico-pathological characteristics of patients with lung cancer and the distance / time to reach the oncology center are being sought;

- For the first time in world practice, a relationship between travel time and distance to the oncology center (on the one hand) and patient survival (on the other) was demonstrated using an analysis based on a large cohort of patients with histologically verified lung carcinoma;

- For the first time in Bulgaria, a retrospective analysis was conducted on the efficacy of different groups of medications in the treatment of colorectal carcinoma beyond the second line;

- The candidate *Associate Professor Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD*, also participates in various interdisciplinary scientific works that focus on important modern medical problems.

IV. Teaching activity

Associate Professor Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD, has a teaching experience at the Department of Propedeutics of Internal Medicine and the Department of Oncology with an annual workload of about two hundred teaching hours. Participates together with students in scientific developments and presentations at national and international scientific forums.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate

I know Associate Professor Nikolay Conev, MD, PhD, from his participation in specialized oncology scientific forums as an excellent professional, erudite and responsible colleague, with an interest in scientific and clinical innovations. The candidate has excellent teamwork skills and leadership qualities. I recommend him to continue his future work in these directions, building on what has been achieved.

Conclusion

Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD is a teacher with a very broad horizon of interests and activities, scientific achievements and original scientific contributions, which have found a place in prestigious international journals with an impact factor and real citation of the results.

In view of the above, I believe that Associate Professor Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD, **meets** the mandatory and specific conditions and science metrics criteria for occupying the academic position of "Professor". I confidently give my *positive evaluation* and *offer to the honorable scientific jury to vote positively Assoc. Dr. Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD to occupy academic position of "Professor"* in scientific specialty "Oncology", field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine.

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