

# STATEMENT

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**About:** Competition for an **Associate Professor** academic position in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sport; professional sphere 7.1. Medicine; in the scientific field of **Hygiene** (incl. labor, communal, school, radiation, etc.) for the needs of the Faculty of Public Health, Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, and general hospital positions in the General Administration of St. Marina University Hospital, announced in State Gazette, issue 8/28.01.2020.

By a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Public Health at the Medical University of Varna, included in protocol № 149/19.03.2020 and by ordinance № P-109-178 from 03.06.2020 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna, I was chosen as an external member of the Scientific Jury (SJ) at a procedure of acquiring the academic position of Associate Professor at MU-Varna. At the first SJ meeting, I was assigned the task of preparing a statement about the competition, where the sole candidate is **Lili Slavcheva Trifonova, MD, PhD**.

The documents I was presented were in compliance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation and follow the requirements for the indicated position. The assessment of the candidate is complex and includes scientific, teaching and practical activities based on the Regulations to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University of Varna.

## **I. Short Information about the Career Path of the Candidate**

Dr. Lili Slavcheva Trifonova graduated from the High School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in Targovishte and the Medical University of Varna in 1987 majoring in Medicine. In 1996, she acquired a specialty in Internal Diseases, and, in 2006, in Nutrition and Dietetics. In 2004, she obtained a professional qualification of Specialist in Health Management at the University of Economics – Varna. In 2018, she acquired a PhD in Gastroenterology, successfully defending her thesis titled: Optimization of the Clinical Approach and Diet Therapy in Gluten Enteropathy.

Career path of the candidate:

- in the period 1987–1990 – intern at the Third Internal Department at the Municipal Hospital of Targovishte;
- 1990–1992 – clinical intern in Internal Diseases at the Higher Medical Institute - Varna;
- since November, 1992 until now – dietician at St. Marina University Hospital, Varna;
- since 2015 – part-time teaching assistant at the Second Department of Internal Diseases, TS of Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, at MU-Varna.

## **II. Scientific Work and Contribution**

The scientific work of Dr. Lili Trifonova is assessed following the minimum and additional scientometric requirements indicated in Appendices 1 and 2 of the Regulations to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Varna based on the presented scientific publications. In a scientometric aspect, the scientific work can be summarized as follows:

#### *1. Total number of scientific publications*

The total scientific work of the candidate includes **61** publications:

- dissertation and dissertation summary – 2;
- publications presented for the acquisition of PhD – 3;
- monographs – 2;
- articles in scientific journals included in the presented academic reference by MU-Varna with reg. № 81/28.02.2020 – 21, of which I only count 19, because the reference includes 2 articles, which were reviewed for the PhD;
- other publications not included in the academic reference – 12;
- textbooks – 2;
- proceedings from conferences – 21.

Out of all publications, **35** comply with the category of Scientific Work. I am excluding the dissertation and the dissertation summary, the publications presented when acquiring PhD, and the proceedings from various conferences.

Out of these publications, **32** are present in the digital reference from NACID as proof of fulfilling the minimum requirements for obtaining the academic position Associate Professor according to LDASRB from 2018 (I am excluding the dissertation).

The presented by the candidate publications for participation in the competition, as a number and category, completely comply with the recommended criteria for the academic position Associate Professor accepted at MU-Varna.

#### *2. Authorship*

Out of the presented 35 scientific publications, in 18 Dr. Trifonova is the sole or first author (51.43%), in 2 of the articles is a second author (5.71%), and third or subsequent author – in 15 publications, which represents 42.86% of the total number. This fact underscores the leading role of the candidate in the presented scientific works.

#### *3. Impact factor*

There is no data on available impact factor.

#### *4. Citation number*

In the academic reference with a reg. № 121/24.03.2020 prepared by MU-Varna it is seen that Dr. Trifonova has been cited or reviewed **8 times**:

- citations in non-indexed journals with peer review – 6 citations, (D12);
- reviews in non-indexed journals with peer review – 2 reviews, (D12).

#### *5. Characteristics and contribution of the scientific publications*

The scientific publications of Dr. Trifonova include the following fields:

- Gluten enteropathy – clinical characteristics, pathogenetic mechanisms, diagnostic features, diet therapy, monitoring, and diet training of the patients (articles A1-1, G6-1);
- Gluten enteropathy and concomitant diseases (articles G 6; G 7-1, 7-4, 8-14, G 8-1, G8-2, G 8-14, G 8-15, G 8-16);
- Pregnancy and gluten enteropathy (articles G8-6);
- Gluten-free diet and its impact on the quality of life (articles A-1, B-3, G-6, G7-3, G8-20, G8-22);

- Chronic liver diseases with viral and non-viral etiology (articles G 14, 15, 16, 21);
- Antioxidants, diet, prevention (articles G-7, G8-18);
- Enteral nutrition, functional foods, problems of adhering to a diet in hospitals (articles G 8-3, 8-4, 8-5, 8-10, 8-11);
- Other problems.

Since the monograph work of Dr. Trifonova - *Gluten-Related Disorders and Gluten-Free Diet. Modern Indications*, is reviewed in detail, I can only underscore that this work has an important scientific research nature. It presents the new developments in the epidemiology of gluten enteropathy as well as the modern methods of diagnostics of this immune-mediated, which is becoming more and more widespread. Undoubtedly, the strong aspect of the monograph is the therapeutic algorithm of gluten enteropathy shown from a clinical dietician's perspective.

The monograph – *Gluten Enteropathy. Scientific Facts and Real Proof*, with an author Dr. Trifonova, has a significant scientific and practical focus. This work is an excellent and useful handbook not only for gastroenterology and dietetics specialists but also for a large number of people who are affected by or just interested in this problem. The book uses a scientific and creative approach to examine the role of the microbiota, genetic sensitivity, hematologic changes and other characteristics of the disorder. The role of the dietician and the nutritional regimen in the prevention and control of gluten enteropathy is presented skillfully.

An important part of the scientific studies of the candidate are those related to the problems of overweight and obesity, as well as the widely spread sedentary lifestyle among adolescents. Healthy nutrition, as an alternative to the modern way of living, is studied including the development of management strategies, suggestions, and specific dietary regimens.

In one of the articles (G8-8), a modern concept is presented. It concerns the composition, structure, and the role of digestive enzymes play in human health. A new approach for their classification has been used. A detailed characterization of the enzymes was done, highlighting their role in digestive processes.

The articles G 7-5, 8-12 demonstrate some important problems in chronic kidney diseases. Diagnostic criteria, dietary regimens, assessment of the nutritional status and the quality of life of such patients are presented.

Dr. Trifonova is one of the few researchers in Bulgaria who, in her publications, studies and identifies the problems of dietary regimens in the hospitals in the Varna region. She has conducted detailed questionnaire surveys unveiling the weak points related to the quality and lack of variety in the food offered, the inadequate amount of fruits and vegetables, dairy and meat, which according to 75% of the responders is linked to the insufficient funding of the hospitals.

Despite the fact that they are not a subject of review, the candidate's numerous participations in national and international conferences and scientific forums (21), where posters and proceedings were presented, count towards her scientific work. This also shows her high activity level and various scientific fields of interest.

#### *6. Significance of the contribution to science and practice.*

The scientific research of Dr. Lili Trifonova is an important contribution to Bulgarian science. This is exceptionally valid for placing the focus on and studying various problems in the field of hygiene of nutrition, dietetics, and gastroenterology. The presented publications show detailed knowledge and interest in the field of the medical specialty she teaches.

In summary, it can be concluded that the scientific contribution of Dr. Trifonova is indisputable and covers the quality and quantity criteria for the academic position Associate Professor at MU-Varna.

### **III. Teaching Activities**

It is seen in the academic reference with a reg. № 112-48/11.02.2020 that Dr. Trifonova started her teaching career in October, 2017. In the last two years, she did lectures and practice classes with an average load of 260 classes, which exceeds the accepted norm of 220. Having in mind her participation in various seminars, in a lecture course in Gastroenterology and Hepatology for specializing physicians, as well as in a national scientific project, it can be concluded that Dr. Trifonova is a lecturer with high enough teaching load. She is also included in the preparation of curricula and tests, actively participating in exam commissions during term examinations.

She has conducted a course titled - Treating Obesity, in Solvay Sodi. She is also a lecturer in a highly specialized-activity course titled – Stem Cell Transplantation.

Dr. Trifonova is a scientific consultant of Dr. Petar Petrov – a post-graduate in Second Department of Internal Diseases, ES of Nephology and Dialysis.

I consider the above-mentioned to be a reliable foundation for her further quality teaching realization by taking the academic position Associate Professor.

### **IV. Practical Activities**

Dr. Trifonova possesses high professional knowledge and experience, has a significant number of additional qualifications and skills for which she has submitted the relevant certificates and documents. She has exhibited a high level of professionalism and competence in her long-standing work as a dietician at St. Marina University Hospital, Varna. She is dedicated to her patients at the Department of Gastroenterology.

She has participated as a co-researcher in 4 clinical studies of drugs for the treatment of hepatitis B and follow-up of patents with cirrhotic changes of the liver, treatment of pancreatic insufficiency with enzyme medicaments, and pancreatic enzymes in the treatment of children with cystic fibrosis.

The candidate is a nutrition expert authorized to prepare statement on the nutrition at the Kamchiya Sports and Education Complex.

She possesses very good computer and statistics skills, exhibits solidarity and tolerance, and works well in a team.

### **V. Critical Remarks and Recommendations**

From the documents I was presented with, I became convinced that the monographs and scientific articles I saw are a result of the individual, purposeful, and comprehensive scientific work of the candidate. During the careful reading of all materials from the procedure I did not find any plagiarism or incorrect citation of other sources.


I think that the visibility and recognition of the interesting and significant results from the scientific research of Dr. Lili Trifonova would increase if, in the future, she widens the circle of scientific journals where she sends her articles. I also recommend that these articles be written in English.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the full scientific and teaching activities and their compliance with LDASRB, I am providing my **positive** statement in regard to the competition and the qualities of the candidate – Dr. Trifonova. I believe that she is an accomplished specialist, researcher and lecturer, and possesses professional qualities and academic potential to take the position of Associate Professor. In this regard:

I recommend that the estimated jury award the **academic position Associate Professor** in higher education **7. Healthcare and Sport**, professional sphere **7.1. Medicine**; in the scientific field of **Hygiene** (incl. labor, communal, school, radiation, etc.) to **Assist. Prof. Lili Slavcheva Trifonova, MD, PhD**.

07.07.2020  
Varna

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