

## STATEMENT

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ON DISSERTATION  
FOR AWARDING A SCIENTIFIC DEGREE *DOCTOR OF SCIENCE*,

Professional field: **7.1 MEDICINE**,  
Scientific specialty: **GENERAL PRACTICE**

**Author: Assoc. Prof. Radost Spiridonova Asenova, MD, PhD**  
Department: **Urology and General Practice, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University of Plovdiv**  
Topic: *From Burnout to Job Satisfaction in General Practice. General Practice / Family Medicine as a Career Choice.*

The Statement is written pursuant to the Order of the Rector of Medical University of Plovdiv № P-1336/18.08.2021

### *General presentation of the procedure and the candidate*

The presented set of electronic materials is prepared accurately and pursuant to the procedure for acquiring a scientific degree *Doctor of Science*, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations for Academic Development at Medical University of Plovdiv and includes all the necessary documents related to the procedure.

Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova received a Master's degree in Medicine and in Healthcare Management at Medical University of Plovdiv. She has two medical specialties – *General Practice* and *Occupational Medicine* and defended a PhD thesis in the field of General Practice. Her academic career started with the establishment of the Department of General Practice at Medical University of Plovdiv in 1999. Assoc. Prof. Asenova went through all levels of academic development from a doctoral student, assistant professor, senior assistant professor, chief assistant professor to associate professor. At present, Assoc. Prof. Radost Asenova is Head of the Department of Urology and General Practice.

Assoc. Prof. Asenova has rich clinical, teaching and research experience. She is an official representative for Bulgaria of two international organisations which are related to General Practice - WONCA Europe (World Organisation of Family Doctors) and EGPRN (European General Practice Research Network). Assoc. Prof. Asenova is one of the establishers and currently the president of BGPSRE (Bulgarian General Practice Society for Research and Education). She is a long-standing scientific secretary of the *General Practice* journal and member of the editorial board of leading international journals in the field of General Practice. Under her professional guidance, three full time doctoral students successfully defended their PhD theses in General Practice.

### ***Relevance and significance of the dissertation***

The scientific paper of Assoc. Prof. Asenova is characteristic of its substantial volume, multi-faceted nature, and in-depth presentation of the complete personality profile of general practitioners (GPs), their susceptibility to burnout syndrome and job satisfaction. Drawing on her long experience as a lecturer and being acquainted with the philosophy of General Practice, Assoc. Prof. Asenova studied and analyzed the character of GPs in real life and outlined General Practice as a separate medical specialty in Bulgaria. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that the General Practice model is one of the most effective and accessible throughout the world and the provided medical care by GPs is constant and continuous. The affirmation and application of the holistic approach to sick and healthy people and patient-centered care are of considerable significance for achieving the desired goals in General Practice. Undoubtedly, the job of GPs is extremely loading and highly stressful and it frequently generates burnout syndrome.

Studies from the world scientific literature prove that work motivation and the provision of high quality medical care are directly related both to the positive attitude and self-evaluation of general practitioners, and to the level of their satisfaction with daily work duties and responsibilities. Based on the complex impact of the risk factors of the working environment, the philosophy of general practice and personality characteristics of GPs, the thesis presents a complete interventional model for burnout prevention and for increasing GP satisfaction which determines the **relevance and significance of the dissertation**.

In this regard, the interventional model developed and proposed by Assoc. Prof. Asenova will serve as coping strategies for complementing the contemporary characteristic of General Practice as philosophy and scientific specialty.

### ***Knowledge of the problem:***

Assoc. Prof. Asenova reveals excellent knowledge of the problem which is demonstrated by the well-structured literature review, the specific formulation of the aim and tasks, the skilful combination of scientific methods and competent analysis of the obtained results.

### ***Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and its contributions***

The main aim of the thesis is formulated precisely and clearly. The six main tasks are specific, well-defined, logically related, and consistent with the intended aim.

The achievement of the scientific aim and tasks is realized with the help of ***mixed methods research design*** or complex methods for quantitative and qualitative studies and various methods for obtaining and analyzing data. Three foreign and validated in Bulgarian questionnaires were used- Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Questionnaire on shared decision making "9-Item Shared Decision-Making Questionnaire – physician version (SDM-Q-Doc-Bulgarian) and Questionnaire on locus of control, as well as self-developed and standardised tools and protocols for techniques: focus groups, expert assessment by the Delphi procedure and nominal group for generating, identification and ranging of the proposed ideas according to priorities. The research method content analysis was used for the analysis of the enormous body of information, gathered through interviews and focus-groups, by which the opinions, attitudes and expressed positions of the units of observation were studied. The rich variety of adequate statistical analysis of the obtained data allows the correct interpretation of the obtained results.

It is an original decision on the side of the author to include and study two main groups as units of observation- GPs and students in their fifth year of medical studies.

Based on the obtained data and the applied appropriate statistical analyses, Assoc. Prof. Asenova reaches important results and conclusions.

For the first time in Bulgarian literature a *synthesized model* on the interaction of the personality profile of GPs, factors related to the working environment and factors, related to the philosophy of the specialty General Practice is presented in a thorough and complex manner, and this is achieved due to *mixed methods* described in detail in the *Materials and Methods* section. The obtained results were published in reference and indexed world-famous data bases with scientific information which contribute to enriching the knowledge of the problem not only in Bulgaria, but on the international level as well. This is also evidenced by the large number of citations in prestigious international journals with IF.

In the first part of the results, the positive aspects of General Practice and the factors for job satisfaction are disclosed based on the conducted interviews and consequent Delphi procedure. Assoc. Prof. Asenova used the prioritised factors, which are identified as important and determinant for the sustainability of the profession and for attracting young specialists in the development of personal original interventional model for career guidance. Based on the research representative for Bulgaria, the positive aspects of General Practice are studied and the factors which would make the job of GPs more appealing and attractive as a career choice are identified. It is important to point out that according to the respondents these are the following: the image of the specialty, sustainability of legislation and reduction in paperwork. Interestingly, financial aspects do not play such an important role and take last place.

In the second part of the *Results* section Assoc. Prof. Asenova studies and analyses the contemporary image of general practitioners based on their style and manner of life, professional peculiarities and work organisation in General Practice, assessment of locus of control, difficulties in attending multimorbidity patients and shared decision-making in General Practice with multimorbidity patients and correlations between the scales locus of control, difficulties in attending multimorbidity patients and shared decision-making.

It is an original idea on the side of the author to study the correlation between the scales locus of control and perception of GPs on the challenges in attending multimorbidity patients and shared decision-making in General Practice. The study found statistically significant correlations between the constructs locus of control, difficulty in attending multimorbidity patients and shared decision-making. Meanwhile, statistically significant differences between the two types locus of control, management of multimorbidity patients and shared decision-making in General Practice was found.

The section dedicated to the study of job satisfaction of GPs and to the complex assessment of burnout syndrome is presented in great depth. The result analysis from three cross-sectional and one comparative studies among GPs discloses important dependencies, patterns, and determinants. With the affirmation of the specialty General Practice, the level of emotional exhaustion decreases, while the level of GP satisfaction is statistically significantly higher in comparison to the time of introduction of the specialty which directly influences the desire of GPs to keep their job. Predictors of burnout are internal locus of control of GPs, age above 50 years, lower level of patient-centeredness, lack of training in person-centered approach, willingness to change the job.

It was proven that GPs who possess internal locus of control are the ones who exhibit sustainability in the profession and achieved higher levels of satisfaction.

The obtained results give the author the grounds to make important conclusions on the relation between satisfaction of GPs, burnout determinants, personal aspects, and factors, related to the philosophy of General Practice and the working environment.

The conclusions are six and they correspond to the set tasks.

A total of 9 scientific contributions related to the topic of the dissertation are formulated, 4 of them are original, one is of confirmatory nature and 4 with applicable nature.

#### ***Assessment of the candidate's publications and personal contributions***

Regarding the procedure and meeting the requirements on scientometric indicators, a total of 13 publications and 17 citations are presented. All presented articles, except for one, are from journals with Scopus and/or Web of Science reference. 5 of them are with IF. In 7 of the articles Assoc. Prof. Asenova is the first author.

A reflection of the scientific significance of Assoc. Prof. Asenova has h-index 6 in Web of Science.

My impressions of Assoc. Prof. Asenova are based on my personal professional contacts with her from the beginning of her professional development and academic growth. She is an excellent professional and researcher, and an innovative lecturer with good communication skills.

I have no critical comments on the nature of the dissertation and the presented materials.

#### ***Summary of the dissertation:***

The presented summary of a dissertation is prepared according to the requirements and reflects systematically, clearly, and precisely the aim, tasks, materials and methods, main results and conclusions.

#### ***Conclusion:***

The dissertation contains scientific and applicable results which are original contribution to science and will contribute to the affirmation of the specialty General Practice. It is scientifically substantiated, thorough and completely meets all requirements of the Law on Development of the Academic Staff of Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), Rules and Regulations for application of LDASRB and the Rules and Regulations of Medical University of Plovdiv.

All this gives me the right and grounds to give my positive assessment on the conducted research and to suggest to the members of the Honourable Scientific Committee that Assoc. Prof. Radost Spiridonova Asenova be awarded the scientific degree *Doctor of Science* in the scientific specialty *General Practice*, professional field 7.1 Medicine from the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sport.

03.09.2021

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Assoc.Prof. Rositsa Tsvetanova Dimova, MD, PhD