

STATEMENT

In accordance with the Order of the Rector of Medical University of Plovdiv № P-1336/18.08.2021

by Prof. Gospodinka Radeva Prakova-Vasileva, MD, PhD
Head of “Ist Department of Internal Disease and General Medicine”
at Medical Faculty of Trakia University- Stara Zagora
of dissertation for awarding a scientific degree *Doctor of Science*,
professional field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty *General Practice*

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Topic: *From Burnout to Job Satisfaction in General Practice. General Practice / Family Medicine as a Career Choice.*

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral candidate

The presented set of electronic materials is pursuant to the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules and Regulations for its application at Medical University of Plovdiv for acquiring a scientific degree *Doctor of Science* from 28.01.2021 and includes all the necessary documents.

Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova acquired a Master's degree in Medicine in 1997 at Higher Medical Institute of Plovdiv. She has two specialties – General Medicine (2004) and Occupational Medicine (2008) and a second Master's degree in Healthcare Management (2009). In 2009 she acquired a scientific degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and since 2012 and 2016 she has been associate professor at the Section of General Practice, Department of Healthcare management, Economics and GP, Public Health Faculty and at the Department of Urology and General Practice, Faculty of Medicine at Medical University of Plovdiv, respectively. Since April 2020 Assoc. Prof. Radost Asenova has been Head of the Department of Urology and General Practice at the Faculty of Medicine, Medical University of Plovdiv. Assoc. Prof. Radost Asenova attended more than 20 additional qualification courses in Bulgaria and abroad in the field of General Practice. She is also a keynote lecturer in the same discipline of the *Basics of General Practice* module for residents in General Practice. She was a guest-lecturer in multiple scientific forums in Bulgaria and abroad. She has attended staff mobility for lecturers in numerous Universities- Greece (2009 and 2010), Italy (2008), Turkey (2008), Belgium and Lithuania (2007). She is a member of 7 international and 4 national scientific organisations. She participated in 25 scientific projects, 10 of them international, she was moderator of various international and national scientific forums. Assoc. Prof. Radost Asenova is a reviewer of 5 scientific journals in Bulgaria and abroad. She is also a member of the editorial board of 5 scientific journals. She is fluent in English - both spoken and written.

2. Relevance of the problem

Twenty years after the introduction of the clinical specialty General Practice, the problems of the career choice for young doctors and the various activities leading to burnout of General Practitioners are still particularly relevant and determine the significance of the dissertation. For the first time a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods is used which allows a detailed evaluation and identifies correlations concerning the vulnerability and sustainability of the profession of a GP with a characteristic of the positive aspects. The validated questionnaire for evaluation of shared-decision making SDM-Q-Doc Bulgarian and of the internationally adopted definition for multimorbidity in Bulgarian, as well as the establishment of Bulgarian General Practice Society for Research and Education (BGPSRE) determine the scientifically applicable nature of the dissertation. An interventional method for career guidance, requiring the participation and coordination of the work of governmental, non-governmental, professional organisations and higher education institutions, is presented.

3. Knowledge of the problem

The dissertation contains all main sections. It is written in 220 pages, abundantly illustrated in 56 tables, 25 figures, 9 schemes and 9 appendices. The reference section contains 296 sources, 64 of them in Cyrillic.

The literature review reveals a thorough knowledge of the problem. The analysis of the available data determines the main aim of Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova directed at studying not only the factors related to the susceptibility of General Practitioners for developing burnout but also those which give the profession sustainability. The literature review also includes all aspects of the study and corresponds to the six main goals set in the dissertation.

4. Research methodology

The chosen research methodology allows to achieve the determined aim and adequate results of the goals of the dissertation. The units of observation and study, the applied qualitative and quantitative methods, scales for assessment of the different panels and validation procedures, in accordance with the standard methodology for the applied questionnaires, are described in detail. Specific software programmes were used, and a precise statistical analysis of the obtained results was performed. The research received a positive evaluation from the Ethical committee at Medical University of Plovdiv.

5. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and the contributions

The obtained results from the dissertation research are presented in 150 pages, abundantly illustrated with evidence, and discussed based on the data from the scientific literature. Extensive work was done which includes results from the face-to-face interview with GPs on the positive factors in their practice, the positive aspects of the specialty from the point of view of students in their fifth year of medical studies, results from the used Delphi procedure for validating the identified positive aspects in the job and nominal group for their prioritizing, results from the conducted telephone interview on the positive elements of the job and identification of factors which would make the profession appealing and attractive. The last representative study was conducted among 832 GPs from all 28 regions of Bulgaria. Based on the obtained results Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova proposes a model for career guidance aiming at preventing burnout which includes personal aspects as a mandatory and integral factor for professional development (professional choice and training), philosophy of the specialty (training) and working environment (health policy and training). What is impressive is the exceptionally thorough presentation of the obtained results. With each section thorough studies are discussed and analysed, and specific conclusions are listed. This section is illustrated very well with 55 tables, 25 figures and 4 schemes.

The main conclusions, which are precisely and clearly formulated, correspond to the goals set. The contributions of the dissertation are original in nature - for the first time a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods is used. All this allows for the detailed evaluation and outlines interrelations with respect to the vulnerability and sustainability of the profession of a GP with a characteristic of the positive aspects. Specific correlations between the scales for assessment of locus of control, patient-centered approach and multimorbidity patients, burnout levels and job satisfaction of GPs in Bulgaria are identified.

The scientifically applicable nature of the dissertation lies in the validation of a questionnaire for shared-decision making SDM-Q-Doc Bulgarian and of the internationally recognized definition for multimorbidity in Bulgarian. The establishment and activity of the Bulgarian General Practice Society for Research and Education (BGPSRE) is of particular importance and Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova is its president, and it promotes the specialty and creates international and interdisciplinary contacts. An interventional method for career guidance is developed, and it involves the coordination of the work among governmental, non-governmental, professional organisations and higher education institutions.

6. Assessment of the candidate's publications and personal contributions

The dissertation is represented by the 6 scientific projects, 3 of them in international. 13 scientific articles were published in journals with Scopus and/or Web of Science reference, including 5 articles with IF. In 7 of them R. Asenova is the first author. 8 of the publications are in English. 17 citations in Web of Science are presented for two of the articles which confirms the fact that the published results are recognized by the international scientific society.

I do not have any critical comments or recommendations on the conducted research and the presented material.

7. Summary of the dissertation

The summary of the dissertation contains 64 pages and corresponds to the scientific paper in contents and quality. It is illustrated with 15 tables, 13 figures and 4 schemes and reflects the main results obtained in the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The presented materials for the statement, as well as my personal impressions, give me the grounds to believe that Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova makes an original contribution with the present dissertation. The detailed research in the problems of general practitioners, extensive erudition, and experience in the study of the issue allow Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova to present this topic, which is current not only in Bulgaria, to obtain results, conclusions and contributions of original and scientifically applicable nature.

One of the impressive results is the developed interventional model for career guidance aiming at preventing burnout among general practitioners, as well as the establishment of the Bulgarian General Practice Society for Research and Education (BGPSRE) - an interdisciplinary professional organisation the main goal of which is to promote the specialty General Practice.

The dissertation of Assoc. Prof. R. Asenova meets the requirements of the Law for Development of the Academic Staff of Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules and Regulations for its application of Medical University of Plovdiv for awarding a scientific degree *Doctor of Science*. The above-mentioned qualities of the scientific work, the results from the research activity, substantial in volume, and the contributions made are the reasons for my positive assessment and I 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.

02.09.2021
the town of Stara Zagora

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Prof. Gospodinka Prakova, MD, PhD

