



## OPINION STATEMENT

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About a competition for occupying the academic position "Professor" in scientific specialty "Rheumatology" in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases "Prof Dr Anton Mitov", Medical University of Plovdiv, for teaching in Bulgarian and English language - part-time (4 hours), announced in SG, issue №35/19.04.2024 with a candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Nikolova Lambova

### **I. Career profile and professional qualifications of the candidate**

A candidate in the announced competition for "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Rheumatology" for the needs of the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases "Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov", Medical University of Plovdiv is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Nikolova Lambova. Assoc. Prof. Sevdalina Lambova was born in 1979 in Karlovo. She has graduated in medicine in 2003 at the Faculty of Medicine, Trakia University, Stara Zagora. In 2014, she has obtained a master degree in public health and health management. She has undergone specializations at UMHAT "Sveti Georgi", Clinic in Rheumatology and has recognized specialties in rheumatology and internal medicine. She works consecutively at UMHAT "Sveti Georgi" Plovdiv, Clinic in Rheumatology; UMHAT "Pulmed", Department in Rheumatology and for 8 years she has been a Head of the Department in Rheumatology at MHAT "Sveti Mina", Plovdiv. She defended her dissertation in "Justus Liebig" University Giessen, Germany in 2011 on the topic "The role of capillaroscopy in rheumatology", which was recognized in 2013 by Medical University of Plovdiv. Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova has total teaching experience over 17 years in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases as in 2007 she was selected as an Assistant Professor after a competition. For more than 2 academic years, since February 2022, she has occupied the academic position "Associate Professor" in rheumatology.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is an expert in capillaroscopy. She has additional qualifications in joint ultrasound (Medical University of Sofia and courses organized by EULAR), abdominal ultrasound for beginners (Medical University of Plovdiv). She has command of English (level C1) and German language (level B2).

## **II. Documents in the competition**

The set of documents submitted by the candidate Assoc. Prof. Sevdalina Lambova for participation in the current competition are in accordance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and additional requirements determined the Regulations for the academic development of Medical University in Plovdiv. A reference has been submitted and the minimum national requirements as well as the additional requirements in Medical University of Plovdiv for occupying the academic position "Professor" are fulfilled. The scientific publications and evidentiary material do not repeat those used in the candidate's previous procedures.

## **III. Scientific research activity**

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova takes part in the competition for occupying the academic position "Professor" with the following scientific works, which were published after occupying the academic position "Associate Professor":

- a monograph, of which the candidate is a single author;
- 29 full-text articles, of which 23 are in refereed journals (11 of them have an impact factor) and 6 publications in non-refereed journals;
- 14 scientific abstracts from conferences and congresses in Bulgaria and abroad.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is the first author of 72% (21/29) of the full-text publications presented in the competition and of 78% (11/14) of the scientific abstracts, which confirms her leading role in the publication of the presented scientific production.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova also presents two chapters in collective monographs (2019, Elsevier and 2020, Bentham Science Publishers) and a section from a university textbook (2013, Publisher Medical University of Plovdiv).

The main scientific contributions of Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova are in the field of capillaroscopic studies in rheumatic diseases, and a number of them are original in the world scientific literature. Interesting for the practice are the publications of Assoc. Prof. Sevdalina

Lambova in cases with early microangiopathy, which concern both the technical analysis of the capillaroscopic images and the diagnostic algorithm in patients in the preclinical stage of systemic rheumatic disease or with undifferentiated connective tissue disease. A study was performed about the characteristics of microangiopathy in undifferentiated connective tissue disease. Interesting for the practice is the research about the differentiation of "scleroderma" and "scleroderma-like" microangiopathy in rheumatic diseases, which was published in the journal *Curr Rheumatol Rev* (2023, impact factor for 2022 - 1.5).

Author's results regarding the role of USB microscopes as tools for capillaroscopic examination in clinical practice demonstrate the opportunities to obtain capillaroscopic images with good quality in rheumatic diseases, as well as to perform quantitative analysis and differentiation of norm and pathology in rheumatology with a lower budget. The observations are confirmatory in nature.

The association of capillaroscopic with immunological findings in systemic sclerosis, and in undifferentiated connective tissue disease was studied as a part of intra-university project. In scleroderma patients, the results are confirmatory in nature, and in undifferentiated connective tissue diseases, new observations were found, based on which an author's differential-diagnostic algorithm was proposed in patients with Raynaud's phenomenon and different combinations of capillaroscopic and immunological findings, as well as a suggestion for update of the classification criteria for undifferentiated connective tissue disease with peripheral vascular syndrome.

In addition, Assoc. Prof. Sevdalina Lambova works actively on the topic of defining a metabolic phenotype of knee osteoarthritis. The studies are part of national scientific project and the results have been published in a number of prestigious international journals with impact factor (*Biomedicine* - impact factor 4.7, *Int J Mol Sci* - impact factor 5.6).

#### **IV. Habilitation work - monograph**

In the current competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova takes part with a monograph on the topic "Capillaroscopy in rheumatology - what else we have to know?", of which she is a single author (Published by Lax book, 2024). This is the second monograph of Assoc. Prof. Lambova after her first monograph published in 2021 - "Capillaroscopy in rheumatology - norm and pathology". The second monograph of Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova includes 12 chapters, in which the following questions are covered:

- the role of microangiopathy in the most common rheumatic diseases;

- the indications for capillaroscopy in rheumatology;
- the categories "capillaroscopic diagnosis" are defined;
- the diagnosis of early microangiopathy;
- capillaroscopic changes in systemic sclerosis, undifferentiated connective tissue disease, systemic lupus erythematosus, dermatomyositis and polymyositis, rheumatoid and psoriatic arthritis;
- data are presented regarding the similarities and differences between the "scleroderma" and "scleroderma-like" type microangiopathy in systemic sclerosis and other rheumatic diseases;
- the question about the role of capillaroscopy in the used classification criteria in rheumatology was analyzed.

The monograph is written according to the approved standards in terms of volume and structure and fulfills the requirements of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. The technical layout of the scientific work is very good as each chapter is accompanied by bibliography. 112 figures and 15 tables are included. Original results of own research in different diseases are presented as well as author's practical guidelines for diagnosis of early microangiopathy, algorithm for classification of patients with peripheral vascular syndrome based on the results of the capillaroscopic examination and immunological tests. I consider that the monograph of Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova is a significant original contribution to modern rheumatology scientific literature, as well as a manual for clinical practice.

#### **V. Citations of the candidate's publications (publication image)**

The publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova have been cited 840 times according to the Scopus database after excluding self-citations, which is proof of the quality of the candidate's scientific works. In the current competition, a list and reference by the National Center for Information and Documentation are presented for part of the citations: 552 citations, of which 533 are in journals indexed in Scopus/Web of Science. The H-index of Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova is 14 (Scopus).

#### **VI. Teaching activity, training of PhD students and trainees, project activity, participation in a university textbook, expert activity**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova has occupied the position "Associate Professor" in Medical University of Plovdiv for more than 2 academic years in accordance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Her total teaching experience is over 17 years and began in March 2007, when she was selected as an Assistant Professor after a competition in the Department of Propedeutics of Internal Medicine. Assoc. Prof. Lambova holds two lecture courses in internal medicine for students in dental medicine in Bulgarian and English language. She also holds practical classes in the disciplines rheumatology and internal medicine for students in medicine and dental medicine in Bulgarian and English language. She conducts semester exams for students in dental medicine in Bulgarian and English language.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is a scientific advisor of three PhD students, two of whom have successfully defended dissertations (Dr. Martin Nikolov and Dr. Georgi Gelov). Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is a supervisor of trainees in rheumatology and takes part in postgraduate training in capillaroscopy.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova has research experience in national and international projects. In the current competition, documents for participation in the following projects are presented:

- a national scientific project funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund, which is on the study of biomarkers in knee osteoarthritis and evaluation of disease-modifying therapeutic interventions in laboratory conditions in an animal model of osteoarthritis;
- educational project – Student practices;
- two international COST projects about the geriatric medicine and the role of physical activity in the elderly;

Assoc. Prof. Lambova is a co-author of a section Rheumatology in a university textbook in Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases in English (Batalov A, Lambova S. Symptoms and investigations of the skeletal system. Diseases of the skeletal system In "Textbook of Propedeutics of Internal Diseases; Basic Principles of Physical Examination", Publisher Medical University of Plovdiv 2013, ISBN 978-619-7085-01-3).

#### *Expert activity*

The candidate has participated as a member of a scientific jury for the acquisition of PhD degree, as well as in commissions for competitions for occupying academic positions and for PhD students.

She is a member of working group in EULAR – Study Group on Micro-circulation in Rheumatic Diseases. She participates as a co-author of a module of EULAR on-line course in capillaroscopy. She has experience as an editor in the journals Current Rheumatology Reviews and Life (Basel).

#### **VII. General assessment of the candidate's compliance with the mandatory conditions, quantitative criteria and scientometric indicators**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova meets the mandatory conditions and the measurable scientometric and academic indicators in the respective groups according to the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the additional requirements determined in the Regulations for the academic development in Medical University of Plovdiv for occupying the academic position "Professor", as can be seen in the attached table:

Groups of indicators	Minimum required points according to additional requirements for occupying the academic position "Professor" in Medical University of Plovdiv	Points of the candidate
A	50	50
C	100	100
D	250	1325.2
E	300	8185
F	140	223.1
G	400	945
<b>Total</b>	<b>1240</b>	<b>10 828.3</b>

#### **VIII. Conclusion**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova fulfills the requirements for occupying the academic position "Professor" according to the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the additional requirements determined in the Regulations for the academic development in Medical University of Plovdiv. The experience of Assoc. Prof. Lambova in the clinical practice, research and teaching activities is in accordance with the requirements for the position. Thus, I vote positively for occupying

the academic position "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Rheumatology" by Assoc. Prof.  
Dr. Sevdalina Nikolova Lambova.

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