



OPINION STATEMENT

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About a competition for the academic position "Professor" in "Rheumatology" in Medical University of Plovdiv

I. Description of the documents in the competition

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Nikolova Lambova takes part in the announced competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Rheumatology". The submitted documents are in accordance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the implementation of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for Academic Development in Medical University of Plovdiv. Publications submitted for participation in the competition have not been used for participation in previous procedures of the candidate.

II. Career development of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova is a member of the Department of Propaedeutics in Internal Diseases "Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov" since 2004 and consecutively she occupies the positions of PhD student (since 2004), Assistant Professor (since 2007), Chief Assistant Professor (since 2018) and Associate Professor (since February 2022). Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova has defended a dissertation on the topic "Role of capillaroscopy in rheumatology" in "Justus Liebig" University Giessen, Germany in 2011, which was recognized by Medical University of Plovdiv in 2013. Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova undergoes specializations at the Rheumatology Clinic, UMHAT "Sveti Georgi", Plovdiv and has acquired specialties in rheumatology (2015) and internal medicine (2016). During her career development, she worked consecutively in the Rheumatology Clinic, UMHAT "Sveti Georgi" – Plovdiv; Department of Rheumatology, UMHAT "Pulmed" and currently at MHAT "Sveti Mina" Plovdiv, where since 2016 until present she is a Head of the Department in Rheumatology. Since 2014, she has a master degree in "Public Health and Health Management" (Medical University of Plovdiv). She has command on English language (C1 level, Cambridge certificate) and German (B2 level, Goethe Institute certificate).

III. Evaluation of the scientific works of the candidate for the overall academic development.

The dissertation of Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" is on the topic "The role of capillaroscopy in rheumatology". After the defense, Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova continued to work intensively on the topic, which led to the publication of the first two author monographs in the country on the use of capillaroscopy in rheumatology in 2021 and 2024. Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is also the first author of National Consensus on the use of capillaroscopy in Rheumatology of the Bulgarian Rheumatology Society.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova is an author and co-author of 77 full-text publications (of which 67 are indexed in Scopus or Web of Science). The total impact factor of the full-text publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova is 110.195.

In the competition for the academic position of "Professor", Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova participates with 23 full-text refereed articles (including 11 with an impact factor), 6 full-text publications in non-refereed journals and 14 scientific reports/summaries from scientific conferences and congresses published in refereed journals. All publications and scientific reports submitted for review for participation in the competition are after occupying the academic position "Associate Professor". Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova has also participation in two collective monographs with chapters entitled "Systemic sclerosis" (Elsevier, 2019) and "Treatment of Raynaud's phenomenon" (Bentham, 2020).

The scientific research and original contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova are about capillaroscopic findings and microvascular pathology in rheumatic diseases, Raynaud's phenomenon, systemic sclerosis and other connective tissue diseases, novelties in the pathogenesis and treatment of osteoarthritis.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova has performed studies on capillaroscopic changes in undifferentiated connective tissue disease, and based on her own observations on the capillaroscopic findings, an author's algorithm for the classification of patients with Raynaud's phenomenon is published and an update of the currently used criteria for undifferentiated disease of connective tissue is proposed.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova's study about the comparison of different capillary diameters in patients with systemic sclerosis and undifferentiated connective tissue disease in cases with early microangiopathy is original and first on the topic. It has been found that early

microangiopathy could be diagnosed by measuring both the apical part and the venous limb of the capillary loops.

Original is also the study of Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova regarding the comparison of "scleroderma" type capillaroscopic pattern in systemic sclerosis and "scleroderma-like" pattern in other rheumatic diseases. Some differences have been found, but in a part of the cases the capillaroscopic changes in different rheumatic diseases may be indistinguishable. An observation regarding the appearance of "scleroderma-like" capillaroscopic changes at the onset of rheumatic diseases other than scleroderma such as undifferentiated connective tissue disease and systemic lupus erythematosus was published.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova published her own results for the first time regarding the presence of "scleroderma-like" capillaroscopic pattern in patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (2013) and rheumatoid arthritis (2012), without evidence of overlap syndrome. Later, for the period from 2017 to 2022, several studies of other author groups were also published, which confirmed this observation in patient populations with systemic lupus erythematosus, including with the onset of the disease in childhood and in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova also has her own studies on the use of USB microscopes as an alternative to videocapillaroscopes in rheumatology practice, as well as on the association of the capillaroscopic findings with the immunological changes in systemic sclerosis and undifferentiated connective tissue disease.

The publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova regarding the frequency of different types of digital ulcers in patients with systemic sclerosis are of practical importance, as well as the observations of successful therapeutic strategies, including in cases with digital necrosis.

In the last years, Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova has also worked intensively on the topic "Knee osteoarthrosis" and the definition of metabolic type knee osteoarthritis by studying clinical correlations and new biomarkers, including adipokines and products of cartilage metabolism in patients with knee osteoarthritis with and without accompanying obesity. As a part of work of national scientific project funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund, Ministry of Education and Science/MES - Bulgaria, Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova participated in a team for conducting fundamental research on evaluation of therapeutic protocol with disease-modifying potential in experimental mice model of osteoarthritis with evaluation for the first time of the effect of administration of the combination of alendronate and metformin with subsequent histological analysis of articular structures.

IV. Evaluation of the monograph of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova

The habilitation monograph of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova for participation in the current competition - "Capillaroscopy in rheumatology - what else we have to know?" (2024) is a natural continuation of the author's first monograph on the topic - "Capillaroscopy in rheumatology - norm and pathology" (2021). In the monograph "Capillaroscopy in rheumatology - what else do we have to know?" (published in 2024), in 12 chapters, the pathological capillaroscopic findings in the most common rheumatic diseases are discussed, which makes it a practical manual for practising rheumatologists and specialists, who use the method in their practice. The monograph is richly illustrated with original capillaroscopic images and enables specialists to acquire practical capillaroscopic skills and refine their diagnostic approach. On the basis of deep knowledge of international experience, significant practical skills and in-depth analysis of the topic, Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova managed with her two monographs to create both scientific works presenting the results of her own scientific research and practical manuals on capillaroscopy in rheumatology, which are the first editions for the country.

V. Citation of the candidate's publications in the national and foreign literature (publication image)

According to the Scopus database (accessed August 2024), the publications were cited 840 times after excluding self-citations. The h-index of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova is 14. In the competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova participates with 552 citations, of which 533 citations are in journals indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus databases and 19 citations in monographs, collective volumes and textbooks with scientific reviewing. A reference from National Centre for Information and Documentation/NACID is presented for 552 citations, with which Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova takes part in the competition.

VI. Complex, qualitative evaluation of the methodical and teaching activity, including scientific guidance of students, PhD students and trainees

1. Teaching activity

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova has over 17-year experience as a clinical University lecturer in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine at Medical University of Plovdiv (since 2007), and since 2022 until now she occupies the

academic position of "Associate Professor" in "Rheumatology". Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova holds two lecture courses in Internal Diseases for students in dental medicine - English-language training (from the first course in 2015 to the present moment) and students undergoing education in Bulgarian. She holds practical classes in Rheumatology for students in medicine and in Internal Diseases for students in dental medicine in Bulgarian and English language. The study load (lectures and practical classes) of Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova for the last two academic years significantly exceeds the norm (360 hours per year with the norm for habilitated part-time lecturers being 200 hours).

2. Training of PhD students and trainees

Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova is the co-scientific advisor of two successfully defended PhD students:

- Dr. Martin Nikolov, Medical University of Pleven; topic of the dissertation: "Effect of body composition on bone mineral density measured by whole-body DEXA" (2023);
- Dr. Georgi Gelov, Medical University of Plovdiv; topic of the dissertation: "Characteristics in the diagnostics and surgical treatment in patients aged > 70 years with acute cholecystitis" (2024).

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is also a scientific advisor of Dr. Sanie Jambazova - a full-time PhD student in Medical University of Plovdiv with the topic of her dissertation work "Rheumatic diseases with peripheral vascular syndrome - associations of the capillaroscopic finding with the immunological profile and the therapeutic regimen".

After occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in "Rheumatology" Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova has been also a supervisor of trainees in rheumatology at the Department in Rheumatology, MHAT "Sveti Mina" Plovdiv.

3. Authorship of university textbook

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is a co-author in a textbook on propaedeutics of internal diseases in English - Textbook of Propedeutics of Internal Diseases – Basic Principles of Physical Examination, Publisher – Medical University of Plovdiv, 2013; ISBN 978-619-7085-01-3, section "Rheumatology" (Symptoms and investigations of the skeletal system; Diseases of the Skeletal System: Rheumatoid arthritis; Psoriatic arthritis; Ankylosing Spondylitis; Systemic lupus erythematosus; Systemic sclerosis; Polymyositis, Dermatomyositis; Osteoarthritis; Gout).

4. Participation in projects and in the activities of professional organizations

Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova takes part in national and international projects. In the current competition, evidence is presented for participation of Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova in the following projects:

1. National scientific project of Bulgarian National Science Fund, Ministry of Education and Science/MES - KP-06-N-33/9 "Diagnostic and prognostic significance of new biomarkers in osteoarthritis and potential for disease-modifying therapeutic interventions";
2. Educational project BG05M2OP001-2.013-0001 "Student practices" - phase 2;
3. International scientific project dedicated to geriatric medicine - COST Action CA21122 "PRoMoting GeRiAtric Medicine IN countries where it is still eMerGing" (member of the Management Committee from Bulgaria);
4. International scientific project on the role of physical activity in old age - COST Action CA20104 "Network on evidence-based physical activity in old age" (member of the Management Committee from Bulgaria).

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova takes part actively in the national conferences and congresses of the Bulgarian Rheumatology Society with reports on current scientific topics. In the last 4 years, she has been a lecturer at the regularly organized workshop in capillaroscopy at the national conferences (from 2020 to 2023). Assoc. Prof. Lambova is a member of the EULAR study group on microcirculation in rheumatic diseases. As a member of this working group, she co-authored an international consensus on documenting the results of capillaroscopy and a module of EULAR on-line course in capillaroscopy. Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova is a member of the organizing committee and lecturer of upcoming course in capillaroscopy organized by the Bulgarian Rheumatology Society and approved by EULAR, which will be held in September this year.

VI. Overall assessment of the applicant's compliance with the mandatory requirements according to the Regulations for Academic Development in Medical University of Plovdiv

The analysis of the candidature shows that Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova meets the mandatory requirements, scientometric indicators, qualitative and quantitative criteria in the respective groups of indicators according to the Regulations for Academic Development in Medical University of Plovdiv.

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| Groups of indicators | Requirements according to the Regulations for Academic Development in Medical University of Plovdiv | Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Lambova, PhD |
| A | 1. Educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" 50 points | 50 points |
| C | 3. Habilitation work - monograph 100 points | 100 points |
| D | Publications and reports 250 points 15 publications, of which 10 indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science, including 5 with impact factor | 1325.2 points 29 publications, of which 11 indexed in Scopus and Web of Science with impact factor (421.6 points), 12 full-text publications indexed in Scopus (220 points) and 6 publications in non-refereed journals with scientific reviewing (135 points) 14 scientific reports/abstracts in refereed journals (518.6 points) 2 Chapters in collective monographs (30 points) |
| E | Citations 300 points 15 citations in journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science | 8185 points 552 citations, of which 533 citations in journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science |
| F | PhD students, trainees, specialties, projects, textbook 140 points - 2 PhD students successfully defended dissertation | 223.1 points Co-scientific advisor of two PhD students successfully defended dissertation (40 points) Training of trainees and PhD students (30 points) Acquired specialties in rheumatology and internal medicine (80 points) |

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| | - 1 scientific project | Activities in projects – participation in a national scientific project (KP-06-N-33/9 Bulgarian National Science Fund, MES); educational project (BG05M2OP001-2.013-0001 "Student practices" - phase 2), international projects (COST Action CA20104, COST Action CA21122) (70 points) |
| | 1 textbook/manual | Co-author in published university textbook (3.1 points) |
| G Study load | 200 points | 720 points |
| and academic position | 200 points | 225 points |
| Total: | 1 240 points | 10 828.3 points |
| H-index | 3 | 14 (Scopus) |

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova meets the requirements for occupying the academic position "Professor" with her qualities as a clinician and lecturer and with her research activities and original contributions to the development of the modern rheumatology. Regarding the measurable scientometric and academic indicators, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Lambova fulfills the conditions and the requirements of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the implementation of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the additional requirements determined in the Regulations for Academic Development in Medical University of Plovdiv for occupying the academic position "Professor" in "Rheumatology". In view of the above, I give my positive vote for Assoc. Prof. S. Lambova to occupying the academic position "Professor" in "Rheumatology" in Medical University of Plovdiv.

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