

STATEMENT

REGARDING THE COMPETITION FOR THE ACADEMIC POSITION "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" AT MU-PLOVDIV

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATE'S CAREER PROFILE

Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova was born in the town of Stamboliyski in 1971. In 1996, she graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the Medical University-Plovdiv. In 2009, she started working as a part-time assistant at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases, and subsequently in 2011 became a full-time assistant. In 2018, she defended a dissertation on the topic "TISSUE EXPRESSION OF TNF- α AND RANKL IN PATIENTS WITH INFLAMMATORY JOINT DISEASES AND ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROME," for which she acquired the scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) in rheumatology. Since October 2019, she has held the position of "Chief Assistant." Her clinical work as a rheumatologist is related to her positions held at University Hospital "Plovdiv" during the period 2003-2008, then at University Hospital "St. George" from 2008 to 2012, and from 2013 to the present at University Hospital "Kaspela" EOOD.

Dr. Velichka Popova is a member of the Union of Scientists of Plovdiv, the Bulgarian Association for Musculoskeletal Ultrasound (BAMSU), and the Bulgarian Medical Society for Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis, and Other Rheumatological Diseases. She is also a reviewer at Rheumatology International, indexed in Scopus/WoS with an impact factor. Dr. Popova has participated as a lecturer at many national and international congresses.

II. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBMITTED MATERIALS FOR THE COMPETITION

Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova, MD, PhD is the sole candidate in the competition for the academic position of "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" in the scientific specialty of "Rheumatology", which was announced in the State Gazette, issue 82 / 27.09.2024, for the needs of MU-Plovdiv for teaching in Bulgarian at the Department of "Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov".

In compliance with Art. 108 of Section IV of the Regulations for Academic Development of MU-Plovdiv, Dr. Popova has provided all required materials and documents, both in paper and electronic format, including a curriculum vitae (CV); a notarized copy of a diploma for completed higher education with an appendix; a notarized copy of a diploma for the acquired ONS "Doctor" in the scientific specialty of the announced academic position (notarized); a certificate of internship in the relevant specialty; and a reference for the academic positions held to date; an academic reference for the candidate's academic workload for the last three academic years; a copy of the latest attestation sheet; an abstract of a dissertation for the ONS "Doctor"; a published independent monograph; a list of publications in scientific journals, referenced and indexed only in Scopus and/or Web of Science; a list of publications in non-refereed journals with scientific review; a list of citations and/or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed only in Scopus and/or Web of Science; a copy of a diploma for recognized specialties in internal medicine and rheumatology (notarized); a document certifying participation in national or intra-university scientific projects; a published textbook at the university level; documents that certify training of interns, postgraduates and doctoral students, issued by the relevant department/department of the higher education institution/scientific organization; a reference for original scientific contributions; a reference self-assessment according to the template for fulfilling the specific scientometric requirements in the main units of MU-Plovdiv; a declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents in accordance with the template; copies of publications; summaries of the submitted publications in Bulgarian and English; and other

documents, such as qualification courses, certificates, memberships, and others; a completed NACID card.

III. EVALUATION OF THE CANDIDATE'S SCIENTIFIC WORKS FOR THE OVERALL ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

The candidate's scientific activity is of high scientific contribution, not only to "Rheumatology", but also to other areas of medicine related to: cardiovascular risk, cardiology, neurology, nephrology, etc.

- 1) In this competition, Velichka Popova, MD, PhD has provided the following articles:
 - 14 refereed articles in Scopus or Web of Science, 9 of which have an impact factor and 5 being first-authored.
 - 32 publications in non-refereed journals with scientific review, in 9 of which she is the first author.

- 2) For her candidacy, Velichka Popova, MD, PhD has authored a monographic work titled: "PRACTICAL GUIDELINES OF VASCULAR ULTRASONOGRAPHY IN RHEUMATOLOGY", published in 2024 by University Publishing House MU Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-237-126-5.

- 3) The candidate's dissertation titled "TISSUE EXPRESSION OF TNF- α AND RANKL IN PATIENTS WITH INFLAMMATORY JOINT DISEASES AND ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROME", which is the first and only study to date examining the tissue expression of the cytokine receptors TNF- α and RANKL on atherosclerotic plaques in patients with inflammatory joint diseases (IJD) and acute coronary syndrome (ACS). In this work, she established criterion values for the cytokines that distinguish patients with IJD and ACS, determined the importance of the GRACE score scale for risk assessment in patients with psoriatic and rheumatoid arthritis, examined the interaction between serum levels of sTNF- α and sIL-6, and defined them as serum biomarkers. Important dependencies, such as the prognostic significance of hsCRP levels, hscTnI, TNF- α , and IL-6 at 48 hours, as well as the relationship between the expressions of the cytokines with hsCRP, hscTnI, and the GRACE score scale, are also established.

In her monograph "PRACTICAL GUIDELINES OF THE COURT" ULTRASONOGRAPHY IN RHEUMATOLOGY", Dr. Popova continues to advocate for the use of vascular ultrasonography in daily practice to assess vascular risk and vasculitic lesions in patients with rheumatological diseases.

Dr. Velichka Popova's publication activity fully defines the profile of her scientific interests, which are multifaceted, interdisciplinary, and include intriguing clinical cases.

IV. EVALUATION OF THE MONOGRAPHIC WORK OR EQUIVALENT PUBLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE COMPETITION FOR "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" BY THE CANDIDATE

The monograph on the topic "PRACTICAL GUIDELINES OF VASCULAR ULTRASONOGRAPHY IN RHEUMATOLOGY", published by UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING HOUSE MU PLOVDIV, ISBN 978-619-237-126-5 in 2024, presents methods for studying vessels from the perspective of a rheumatologist in an accessible and comprehensive manner. Drawing on her years of experience, the author conducts a thorough analysis of vascular changes, systematically

describes normal and pathological parameters, and provides a detailed literature review in a clear and organized manner. The assessment and study of vascular changes in patients with autoimmune inflammatory joint and systemic connective tissue diseases are given special importance in this monograph. These topics are crucial for clinical practice, yet there is a lack of sufficient data and training materials with a focus on rheumatology. The section on vasculitis, presented for the first time in the Republic of Bulgaria from a rheumatologist's perspective, summarizes the main nosological units, changes, and the author's personal contributions. Additionally, the author discusses future perspectives that could be developed in this field. Through this work, the author initiates a trend that will likely continue to gain popularity in the future.

V. CITATIONS OF THE CANDIDATE'S PUBLICATIONS IN THE NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LITERATURE (PUBLICATION IMAGE)

For her candidacy, the candidate has submitted 20 citations in journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE, QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL, METHODOLOGICAL AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING SCIENTIFIC GUIDANCE OF STUDENTS, DOCTORAL STUDENTS, AND POSTGRADUATES

Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, started working as an assistant professor at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases in March 2011, and as a chief assistant professor since October 2019. Her teaching workload is over 1100 hours per year. She teaches and trains medical students in Bulgarian, as well as rheumatology residents, and is a member of examination committees. She lectures in basic courses for students in Rheumatology, and teaches postgraduate courses in capillaroscopy.

Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, has participated in five intra-university projects, the results of which have been published in international journals.

In addition to her work on the preparation of her dissertation, Dr. Popova is actively involved in popularizing ultrasonographic examination of vessels among the rheumatology community. She is conducting research on changes in vasculitic lesions and has introduced elastography of vessels for the first time in the Republic of Bulgaria, thereby paving the way for future developments of modern ultrasonographic methods in rheumatology.

VII. CRITICAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have no critical notes or additional recommendations.

VIII. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE CANDIDATE'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE MINIMUM NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

I believe that the candidate fully meets the requirements, mandatory conditions, and scientometric indicators described in the Regulations for Academic Development at the Medical University - Plovdiv: Art. 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3, as well as the requirements under Art. 2b, paragraph 5 of the Law on Academic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria. Additionally, the candidate

meets the specific requirements for the Medical University - Plovdiv by field of study and for units with clinical activity.

Group indicators	Content	AD " Associate professor" (number of points)	V. Popova, MD, PhD (number of points)
A	Indicator 1	50p	50p
B	Indicator 2	-	-
C	Indicator 3 and 4	100p	-
D	Sum of indicators 5 to 9	200p	663.38p
E	Sum of indicators 10 to 12	100p	300p
F	Sum of indicators 13 to 22	60p	193,41p
G	Teaching activities and academic position	300p	1668,4p
Total		810p	2875,19p

IX. CONCLUSION

I firmly believe that Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova, MD, PhD fully satisfies the mandatory and specific conditions and scientometric criteria for obtaining the academic position of "Associate Professor." I recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury vote in favor of granting Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova, MD, PhD the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases "Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov."

Date: Feb. 23, 2025

Statement provided by:

Prof. Rositsa Karalilova, MD, PhD, DMSc