

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 Stamboliyski in 1971. She completed her studies at the Medical University-Plovdiv's Faculty of Medicine in 1996. She initially became a part-time assistant at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine in 2009, and she subsequently transitioned to a full-time position in 2011. In 2018, she successfully defended a dissertation on the topic of "Tissue expression of TNF- α and RANKL in patients with inflammatory joint diseases and acute coronary syndrome," earning her the scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) in rheumatology. Since October 2019, she has served as a "Senior 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 Bulgarian Medical Society for Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis, and Other Rheumatological Diseases, the Bulgarian Association for Musculoskeletal Ultrasound (BAMSU), and the Union of Scientists of Plovdiv. She serves as a reviewer for Rheumatology International.

II. General description of the materials submitted for the competition

The candidate has submitted all required documents and materials under Art. 108 of Section IV of the Regulations for Education of the Medical University of Plovdiv. These include a resumé; a notarized higher education diploma with an appendix; a certified copy of the PhD degree in the scientific specialty of the announced academic position; a certificate of internship in the relevant specialty; a reference for the academic positions held; an academic reference for the candidate's academic workload for the last three years; a copy of the latest attestation sheet; an abstract of the PhD dissertation; a published habilitation monograph; publications in scientific journals indexed only in Scopus and/or Web of Science; non-refereed peer-reviewed publications in journals, citations and reviews of scientific publications indexed only in Scopus and/or Web of Science, notarized diplomas for acquired specialties, a certificate of participation in national or intra-university scientific projects; a textbook for a higher education institution, certificates for training of interns, postgraduates; and doctoral students from a relevant department of a higher education institution/scientific organization, a reference to scientific originality; sample referential self-assessment for the scientometric requirements of 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 overall academic development

With its interdisciplinary approach and focus, the candidate's research activity makes a significant scientific contribution to Rheumatology and other specialties.

1) In this competition, Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, has submitted the following articles:

- 14 refereed articles in Scopus and/or Web of Science, 9 of which have an impact factor, with 5 of them being authored by her.
- 32 publications in non-refereed journals with scientific review, with 9 of them being authored by her.

2) For her candidacy, Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, has presented a monographic work on the topic: "Practical guidelines for vascular ultrasonography in rheumatology", published by University Publishing House MU Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-237-126-5 in 2024.

3. Her dissertation work, titled "Tissue Expression of TNF- α and RANKL in Patients with Inflammatory Joint Diseases and Acute Coronary Syndrome," is the first and only study to examine the expression of the cytokine receptors TNF- α and RANKL on atherosclerotic plaques in patients with inflammatory joint diseases (IJD) and acute coronary syndrome (ACS) using immunohistochemistry. In addition to analyzing expression, she identifies sTNF- α and sIL-6 as biomarkers for patients with ACS, highlights the prognostic significance of hsCRP, hscTnI, TNF- α , and IL-6 levels at 48 hours, and explores the relationship between cytokine expression and hsCRP, hscTnI, and the GRACE score scale.

Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, promotes vascular sonography as a fundamental screening method for high-risk patients and advocates for its routine use in assessing conditions related to vascular involvement. Expanding on this topic, she published a separate monograph titled "Practical Guidelines for Vascular Ultrasonography in Rheumatology" through the University Publishing House MU Plovdiv, with ISBN 978-619-237-126-5 in 2024. This clinically focused material synthesizes years of experience and knowledge, providing an analysis of basic ultrasonographic techniques for evaluating vascular changes in rheumatology. The monograph also includes an extensive literature review and ideas for future projects, such as the application of elastography in vascular pathology.

Dr. Velichka Popova's publication activity is entirely guided by her interdisciplinary scientific approach.

IV. 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; has an H-index of 4.

V. Comprehensive, qualitative assessment of the educational, methodological and teaching activities, including scientific supervision of students, doctoral students, and postgraduates

Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, was appointed an assistant professor at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine in March 2011, and promoted to a senior assistant professor in October 2019. Her teaching responsibilities exceed 1110 hours annually. She instructs medical students in Bulgarian and postgraduates in rheumatology. She serves on examination committees. She is a lecturer for postgraduate courses in capillaroscopy and rheumatology. Dr. Popova has collaborated on five intra-university initiatives with researchers from various departments and universities.

Dr. Popova's contributions are intended to increase the awareness of the advantages of vascular sonographic evaluation in rheumatology, broaden the indications and applications of this technique in vasculitis, emphasize the necessity of evaluating cardiovascular risk, and identify high-risk patients with rheumatological diseases. Furthermore, her attention is also focused on the future of contemporary ultrasonographic methodologies, which may present novel opportunities for rheumatology practice.

VI. Critical remarks and recommendations

There are no critical remarks or additional recommendations to make.


VII. Overall assessment of the candidate's compliance with the minimum national requirements

I believe that the candidate fully satisfies the requirements, mandatory conditions, and scientometric indicators described in the Regulations for Academic Development at the Medical University—Plovdiv: Art. 2b, paras. 2 and 3, respectively, the requirements under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Law on Academic Development of the Medical University of Plovdiv, and the specific requirements for the Medical University of Plovdiv by field of study and for units with clinical activity.

Group indicators	Content	AD " Associate professor" (number of points)	Dr. V. Popova, (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

VIII. Conclusion

I firmly believe that Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova, MD, 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 the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine "Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov."

Statement by: 

Заличено на основание
Чл.5 §1, б. "В" Регламент (ЕС)2016/679

Date: 25.02.2025

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivan Sheytanov, MD, PhD 