REVIEW

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Regarding: Competition for the academic position of "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" in the field of higher education 7. "Health and Sports", professional field 7.1 Medicine ", scientific specialty "RADIATION THERAPY" for the needs of the Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov"

Information about the Competition

The competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "Radiation therapy" has been announced for the needs of the Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov". The announcement of the competition was published in the State Gazette, issue 61/29.07.2025 and on the website of the Burgas State University.

According to Order № РД-345/30.09.2025г by the Rector of the Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" and in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for its implementation, and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov", I was appointed as an internal member of the Scientific Jury in the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty "Radiation therapy". The decision of the first remote session of the Scientific Jury was for me to present a review.

All procedural requirements for announcing the competition, the deadline for submitting documents and the selection of the Scientific Jury have been met. Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the competition - **Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, MD, PhD** a specialist in "Radiation therapy", who meets all the requirements of the LDASRB, its regulations, and the rules for academic development of BSU.

All regulatory requirements regarding the competition procedure have been met. The candidate's documents are comprehensive and in full compliance with the regulatory requirements for admission to participate in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Biographical Data of the Candidate

Kiril Zhelev, MD, PhD graduated from secondary education in 2010 at the Mathematics High School "Dobri Chintulov", Sliven, and in 2016 and in 2016 obtained a Master's Degree in Medicine from the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna. Since 2022 he has a recognized specialty in Radiation therapy. In 2024, he successfully defended his scientific and educational degree PhD, Specialty "Oncology" on the topic: "The

prognostic significance of the preoperative rectal cancer assessment scale (NAR score) and its relationship with the skeletal muscle index in patients with rectal cancer treated with preoperative chemoradiotherapy" at the University Hospital of Oncology "Prof. Ivan Chernozemski" – Sofia.

Kiril Zhelev, MD, PhD began his academic development as an assistant professor in 2017 at the Department of Imaging and Radiotherapy at MU-Varna, until 2019.

Kiril Zhelev, MD, PhD has participated in a number of prestigious scientific forums, including the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) forum - in 2022, the European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO) forums - in 2020, 2021 and 2025, the European Society of Radiation Oncology (ESTRO) forums 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 and the forum of the European Multidisciplinary Urological Oncology Congress (EMUC) – 2025. He is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Union (BLS) and the European Society of Radiation Oncology (ESTRO).

The candidate career progression reflects continuous development, matching his growing competence and professional experience in radiotherapy.

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Academic Position "Associate Professor"

Kiril Zhelev, MD, PhD has met the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Indicators Group A: Includes a requirement for a defended dissertation, which covers **50 points**. Evidence of this has been provided.

Indicators Group B: Under this group of indicators, Zhelev, MD scores **119.23 points**, out of a required **100**. The candidate has provided **10 scientific publications** in journals that are refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information.

Indicators Group D: This includes the publications presented. Zhelev, MD has presented **23 scientific publications and reports in periodicals**, all of them in full text published after acquiring the degree "PhD". Fourteen of the publications are in English and 9 are in Bulgarian.

In this group of indicators, Zhelev, MD has **229.42 points**, with a required score of **220**.

The relevant evidence has been presented.

Indicators Group E: Includes the total number of citation points. In this group, Zhelev, MD achieved **150 points**, with a required **60**. A list and supporting material for citations of publications is attached - **10 citations** in international journals in the Scopus, Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar databases.

The total Impact factor is 235.807.

Summary Evaluation of the Main Scientific Contributions

Dr. Zhelev's main scientific contributions can be grouped as follows:

1. Research on sarcopenia in patients with rectal cancer

In his dissertation, Zhelev, MD investigated the relationship between the skeletal muscle index (SMI) and the neoadjuvant rectal score (NAR) in patients with locally advanced rectal adenocarcinoma treated with neoadjuvant combined chemoradiotherapy (nCCRT) with capecitabine and subsequent surgery. We measured the thickness and skeletal muscle index in 91 patients before and after preoperative CCRT and examined the relationship between the change in SMI and NAR score. Predictive markers were determined that could identify patients at risk of muscle weakness and poorer treatment outcomes.

2. Radiosurgery for meningiomas

In two of his scientific papers, Zhelev, MD examines the treatment of meningiomas with radiosurgery, using the RANO criteria and their relationship with the NANO scale for evaluation. Patients who responded to treatment had significantly lower NANO scores than those who did not respond. The biomarker was able to significantly and "excellently" differentiate between responders and non-responders.

In two other scientific papers, Zhelev, MD presents the role of inflammatory haematological indicators before radiosurgery treatment of meningiomas, as a biomarker that can perfectly distinguish patients with a response to the treatment and those with a potentially poor outcome.

3. Research on the predictive role of SUVmax in patients undergoing radiosurgery for Adrenal metastases

Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT) is a well-established method for the treatment of oligometastatic disease and is increasingly being used to treat adrenal metastases. Dr. Zhelev conducted a study on the role of SBRT in the treatment of adrenal metastases and the relationship with SUVmax before the start of therapy. Patients who responded to SBRT had significantly lower SUV max values compared to those who did not respond. At appropriate SUV max cutoff values, the biomarker significantly and moderately discriminated between patients with and without metabolic response.

4. Research on distress in cancer patients

Dr. Zhelev is conducting a study of distress in patients with malignant solid tumours. Distress levels were measured using a validated instrument and an alternative ultra-brief screening test for distress was proposed by determining the subjective perception of time in patients. In the studied patient population, correlations between basic demographic and clinicopathological characteristics of the patients on the one hand and levels of distress and the perception of time on the other hand were investigated. Predictive markers were determined that could identify patients at risk of having high levels of distress.

5. **Research of the frequency of KRAS mutations in patients with colorectal carcinoma and its prognostic role in the treatment of liver metastases with radiosurgery**

A large study investigated the frequency and variants of KRAS mutations in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer undergoing radiosurgery for liver metastases, examining their prognostic role in terms of progression-free survival and overall survival.

6. **Research in the field of sarcopenia**

Dr. Zhelev presents the most developments in this area, with the studies based on patients with various nosology (head and neck tumours, glioblastomas, brain metastases). The developments show that patients with lower muscle mass have worse overall survival and tend to respond worse to the respective treatment.

Evaluation of Teaching Activity

Kiril Zhelev, MD was a lecturer of medical and dental students in the discipline "Radiation Therapy" - Bulgarian and English language at the Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Dental Medicine of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna, for the period 2017-2019. He actively participated in the administrative and organizational activities of the Department of Imaging Diagnostics and Radiotherapy and in the conduct of the semester exams in the above-mentioned disciplines.

Conclusion

Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, MD, PhD is a well-established university lecturer and medical specialist with an affinity for scientific work. The presented publications, citations, documents and evidence convincingly show that **Zhelev, MD** meets the requirements for quantitative and qualitative indicators for scientific and teaching activity for holding the academic position of **"Associate professor"** in accordance with the requirements of the LDASRB, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at the Burgas State University.

Based on the above arguments and evidence, I strongly recommend that the esteemed members of the scientific jury confer the academic position "Associate Professor" upon Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, MD, PhD, in the field of higher education 7. "Healthcare and Sports", professional field 7.1 "Medicine", scientific specialty "Radiation therapy".

10.11.2025   Prof. Ivan Donev, MD, PhD