

## RECENTIONS

by Assoc. Prof. Vanina Mihaylova-Alakidi, PhD

Faculty of Public Health " Prof. Tsekomir Vodenicharov, MD, D.Sc.", Medical  
University - Sofia,  
Department of Physiotherapy

**REFERENCE:** competition for the academic post of "DOCENT" in professional field 7.4. Public Health (Occupational Therapy), Faculty of Public Health and Health Care, Department of Rehabilitation and Maritime Medicine, Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University, announced in the State Gazette No. 45/17.06.2022.

### I. Procedural matters

On the basis of Article 4 (2) and Article 25 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 57. (2) of the Regulations for the Implementation of the RAADB Act and Article 70 (2) of the RMPNSAD at the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" by Order No. **RD-259/15.09.2022 of the Rector of the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov"** and the decision of the Chairman of the Scientific Jury I have been appointed as a reviewer in connection with the competition for the academic position "DOCENT" in the field of higher education 7. Health and Sport, professional field 7.4. Public Health (Occupational Therapy). In the competition announced in State Gazette No. **45/17.06.2022** the only candidate is Chief Assistant Sonya Kostadinova Nencheva, PhD.

### II. General description of the materials submitted to the competition

The submitted electronic and paper set of materials for the competition comply with the Law on Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Bulgaria, respectively the Regulations for its application, including the Regulations for the conditions and procedure for the acquisition of scientific degrees and the occupation of academic positions at the **University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov"**.

The necessary supporting material is attached, as well as declarations of originality and credibility of the candidate's scientific works.

### III. Analysis of the candidate's career profile

Chief Assistant Sonya Kostadinova Nencheva, PhD was born on 28.12.1971 in the town of Sredets, Burgas. In 1992 she graduated in Rehabilitation at PMI-Plovdiv, acquiring a

Bachelor's degree in Health Care in 2003 at MU-Plovdiv and a Master's degree in Health Management at MU-Sofia in 2007. In 2022 she graduated her Master's degree in "Occupational Therapy in the Community" at the University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev" with the professional qualification "Master Occupational Therapist" - diploma № 058938/04.07.2022, in 2014 at MU-Plovdiv, Chief Assistant Sonya Nencheva acquired the educational-scientific degree "Doctor" after the defense of her dissertation thesis on the topic "Problems with Healthcare and Care in Nursing Homes in Some Regions of South Bulgaria".

She started working as a Key Position Manager and Medical Representative in the Pharmaceutical Industry in 2004 and continues to hold this position ever since.

*Her academic development* started in 2016 as a visiting assistant professor at the Department of Physiotherapy, Rehabilitation and Resortology, Faculty of Public Health and Health Care, Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University and Medical College, Sofia. Burgas. She has a consistent and regular academic growth in her career - regular PhD student (2009), awarded PhD (2014), Assistant Professor (2016), Chief Assistant Professor (2019).

Principal Assistant Professor Nencheva has enclosed a certificate of experience in the respective specialty, including a reference for the academic positions held. 7 certificates for the improvement of qualification skills (1996 - April 2022) were submitted: postgraduate course on: "Stimulative Therapeutic Methods", at the Department of Physical Medicine, Higher Medical Institute - Plovdiv; Microsoft office '97 course, at the Youth Scientific Society "Asklepii", Medical University - Plovdiv; computer Training for Medical Specialists course, at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv; course in English as a Foreign Language, CEF Level Intermediate, ALIS; practical training course on use the Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge platform, BIKAM ltd.; course "Statistical software package SPSS v.17.0", Medical University - Plovdiv; course "Management of key customers and medical teams in the pharmaceutical industry", E-training Centre.

She is a member of prestigious scientific organizations: the Bulgarian Scientific Society of Public Health (BSSPH) and the Association of Bulgarian Occupational Therapists (ABOT).

#### **IV. Teaching and learning activities**

The candidate's total teaching experience corresponds in duration to her academic activity. As an assistant professor and chief assistant professor, As an assistant and chief assistant professor, she conducts practical and seminar exercises for students to acquire the "Professional Bachelor"; "Bachelor" and "Master" from the specialties: "Balneo, Spa and Wellness Management", "Medical Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy", "Rehabilitation", "Assistant

Pharmacist", in the following disciplines: "Ergotherapy and Ergonomics", "Functional Assessment Methods", "Massage", "Medical Statistics", "Medical Ethics and Deontology".

She is involved in *lecturing on* "Medical Statistics" for students of "Health Management", "Medical Ethics and Deontology" and "Massage" for students of "Rehabilitation Therapist" and "Assistant Pharmacist", incl. "Occupational Therapy and Ergonomics"; "Functional Assessment Methods"; and "Massage" for students of the specialty "Balneo, Spa and Wellness Management", Master's degree; "Medical Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy"; "Medical Statistics"; "Health Management", Bachelor's degree.

She teaches practice and pre-degree internship of students from the specialty "Medical Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy", Bachelor's degree. She is actively involved in the scientific and methodological support of students and preparation of curricula in "Ergotherapy and Ergonomics" for the specialty "Balneo, SPA and Wellness Management", Master's degree and "Medical Rehabilitation and Ergotherapy", Bachelor's degree.

Her teaching load exceeds the statutory one ( $\frac{1}{2}$  staff), respectively for the academic year 2020/2021 it amounts to 284.5 teaching hours, of which 204.5 teaching hours, for the academic year 2019/2020 - 276.6 teaching hours, of which 196.6 teaching hours, for the 2018/2019 academic year - 261.8 academic hours, of which 181.8 are classroom hours. Her overall attestation grade is "Very Good" (2022).

## **V. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific works for the overall academic development**

*General characteristics of scientific production and publication activity.* The publication activity of the candidate is characterized by a diverse content of scientific production (18), with an emphasis on medico-social rehabilitation and quality of life, education and health literacy of health care consumers with socially significant diseases, including prevention and prophylaxis of complications, community-based occupational therapy, oral health, palliative care and health needs management; public health issues.

*The quantitative comparison of the data presented by the candidate corresponds to the required minimum scientific-metric criteria of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University for the academic position of Docent in the professional field 7.4. Public Health. She has published 1 independent monograph, 18 full-text publications in peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes (including 4 for PhD), of which 13 as an independent or lead author (72.22%, respectively). The candidate has presented 9 participations in scientific forums, of which national (4) and international (5).*

The total number of *citations* noted and presented in the scientific production is 14, 4 of them are in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals and 10 citations in textbooks with peer-reviewed scientific literature. No reference to citations from the National Library of Medicine has been provided, which could enhance the candidate's publication image.

She is involved in 4 scientific and educational *projects*, respectively at university level (3) and international level (1), among which the current topics of psycho-social and medical rehabilitation and occupational therapy of patients with oncological diseases stand out - *head of an* internal university project (2021-2022); university education, incl. Innovative approaches in the training and qualification of health professionals for the prevention of diabetes mellitus and the leading complications - *member of an* internal university project (2018-2019); Investigating the severity of atherosclerotic changes of peripheral blood vessels in diabetics - *member of an* intramural project (2020-2022) Candidate's expert participation in the scientific team of an international project "Development of digital skills for online rehabilitation therapies/e-KINE, Erasmus +" is a confirmation of her scientific authority. She participates in the Quality Committee of the Faculty of Public Health and Health Care, appointed by the Rector's Order No. RD-234/31.10.2018, as well as in the development of the curriculum of the discipline "Ergonomics and Occupational Therapy" for the Master's degree of the specialty "Balneo, Spa and Wellness Management". She also conducts training seminars and practical sessions for trainees.

*Qualitative analysis.* The scientific production is accompanied by valuable content. A polyvalent research methodology and the introduction of modern statistical research tools are used. They are divided into the following areas: public health - health promotion, prevention of diseases and complications, prevention of socially significant diseases, health awareness and education of patients and their relatives, as part of the occupational therapy process; integrated medical and social care and ethical aspects of health care for people with chronic diseases; quality of life and health care; monitoring and evaluation of the quality of medical education and professional training of health care professionals. The indicated directions are not clearly distinguished, resp. differentiated according to their specifics.

The publications are based on a proprietary complex sociological methodology, illuminate theoretically and in applied terms integrated care and its role for the implementation of a medical-social approach to socially significant diseases. A comprehensive theoretical-practical innovative learning model is derived in response to meeting patients' needs and expectations for improved health and quality of life. The psycho-emotional attitudes of patients in the palliative care sector are explored, respectively the impact of cancer on quality of life, the

role and need for a multidisciplinary team is highlighted, including the role of occupational therapists and the importance of art therapy. The need for health awareness and management decisions regarding the inclusion of occupational therapy as an integral health service providing an approach to restore mental balance and cope with activities of daily living in these patients is suggested. Original propositions related to risk assessment and prevention of traumatic fall injuries in older adults are outlined. Attitudes toward involvement in prevention programs and patients' readiness for education on the topic are examined, respectively. The importance of occupational therapy is highlighted.

The elaborations are well argued and of a strongly scientific and applied character. The more significant **contributions** include:

- The opinion is formulated that health awareness and communication technologies can be used as a source of up-to-date and reliable information on the health status of people with chronic diseases.
- The importance of prevention and the attitudes of adult patients to their involvement in education programmes related to falls risk assessment are highlighted. Rehabilitation is given the role of a prosthetic factor. A strong positive effect is found as a result of occupational therapy.
- It is proposed to introduce an interdisciplinary approach, skillfully combining psychological, communication and occupational therapy techniques and methods, as well as introducing algorithms with the inclusion of art therapy to influence the emotional state of patients, incorporating the creative possibilities of the individual for adaptation and return to the community.
- A comprehensive conceptual theoretical-practical innovative health care model for the application of a medical-social approach to socially significant chronic diseases is developed, according to the personal needs of the individual.
- Current approaches and priorities in the promotion of healthy eating habits in patients with type 2 diabetes in the context of changing social reality are outlined.
- The necessity of a multidisciplinary team, including occupational therapists to influence the physical, mental and social balance of patients in terminal condition is justified.

## **VI. Evaluation of the monographic work or equivalent publications submitted to the competition**

The author of the monographic work "Ethical Problems in Palliative Care", ISBN 978-619-7353-47-1, publishing house "Baltika-2002", Burgas, 2021 discusses the problem of the contemporary application of the provided palliative care in Bulgaria. At the same time a

comparison is made, based on literature data, related to the organization and conduct of palliative care (organizational forms, teams, aspects and principles) in the UK and other European countries. Opportunities for resolving emerging ethical dilemmas are highlighted, including the role of communication in truth telling, abstinence from and cessation of treatment, and equity in resource allocation. The specifics of behavior in the delivery of palliative health care in childhood are addressed. A sociological study on ethical issues related to the medical team-patient relationship is conducted. A panel of issues concerning palliative care accessibility and patient satisfaction is highlighted. The importance of the multidisciplinary team and the role of the occupational therapist in improving the quality of health care, including management of the patient's style and lifestyle, is highlighted.

**VIII. General assessment of the candidate's compliance with the minimum national requirements** under Article 2b, Paragraphs 2 and 3, respectively the requirements under Article 2b, Paragraph 5 of the RASDPD and the specific requirements by fields of study, as defined in the Regulations for Academic Development at Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University under Article 70(5).

As it is evident from the following arguments, Ch. as. Sonya Nencheva, PhD meets the obligatory scientific-metric criteria as well as the indicators for the evaluation of the teaching activity for the academic position "Associate Professor" at the Faculty of Public Health and Health Care, Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University.

Group of indicators	Contents	Associate Professor	Principal Assit. Sonya Nencheva, PhD
A	Indicator 1	50	50
B	Indicator 2	-	-
B	Indicators 3 or 4	100	100
Г	Sum of indicators 5 to 9	220 points	250
Д	Sum of indicators 10 to 12	60 points	120
E	Sum of indicators 13 to 22	20 points - 1 research projects (without GCP); training of trainees	50
	Total	450	570

## VIII. Conclusion

Based on the overall assessment of the candidate in the announced competition, I summarize that there are skills for the introduction and use of innovative methodological approaches, teaching experience and professional competence for optimizing health processes.

Taking into account that there is **compliance** with the criteria for the selection of "Associate Professor", area of higher education 7. Health and Sport, professional field 7.4. Public Health (Occupational Therapy), for the needs of the Department of Rehabilitation and Marine Medicine, Faculty of Public Health and Health Care, University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov", I **confidently recommend the scientific jury to award to Assoc. Prof. Sonya Nencheva, PhD.**

08.11.2022

Assoc. Prof. Vanina Mihaylova-Alakidi PhD

Sofia