

OPINION

by Professor Plamen Stoyanov Dimitrov, MD, PhD on a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor", field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional area 7.1. Medicine, in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management", for the needs of the "Mental Health" Department, Directorate "Mental Health and Prevention of Addictions" in the National Center for Public Health and Analysis, announced in SG No. 90/11.11. 2022

One candidate participated in the announced competition – Assistant Professor Vladimir Venkov Nakov, MD, PhD. The candidate has submitted all necessary documents for participation in the competition, corresponding to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Implementation and the Rules for the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at the National Center for Public Health and Analyses

Dr. V. Nakov meets the minimum national requirements under Art. 1a of the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB.

Brief data on the candidate's career development

Assistant Professor Vladimir Venkov Nakov, MD, PhD graduated in medicine in 1997 at Medical University, Pleven. In 2002, he acquired the specialty "Psychiatry" at the MU, Pleven, and in 2015, after defending a dissertation on the topic "Epidemiological study of suicide attempts in the Republic of Bulgaria", Dr. Nakov obtained the PhD degree in "Social medicine and organization of healthcare and pharmacy". He completed a three-year qualifying course in mental health at the University of California - Berkeley.

Dr. Nakov's work experience began in Levski Municipal Hospital in 1998, as a district doctor. Then, until 2006, he worked successively as a psychiatrist in a day hospital at the "Dr. Georgi Stranski" UMHAT, Pleven; psychiatrist-consultant in Pleven Prison, OZ "Kailka", Pleven; Psychiatrist-resident in the consultative emergency department at the City Dispensary for the Treatment of Mental Illnesses - Sofia.

From 2007 to the present, he is an assistant professor at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate, Mental Health Department. He is an honorary assistant at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

He is a scholarship holder of the Center for Academic Research - Sofia 2020. Dr. Nakov is a member of the Board of Directors of the Bulgarian Psychiatric Association; The Supervisory Board of BPA; Bulgarian Physicians Union; Section on Suicidology of the European Psychiatric Association; Mental Health Association for South East Europe.

General characteristics of the candidate's research and scientific-applied activity

The publications and references submitted for participation in the competition prove the candidate's high scientific productivity mainly in the field of mental health, public health and psychiatry. In the current competition, Dr. Nakov participated with 28 publications, distributed by types as follows: 1 author's abstract; 3 monographs in which he is author and co-author; 17 publications in Bulgarian and 7 in foreign journals and anthologies. Dr. Nakov's scientific activity includes 26 participations in scientific forums, mainly abroad.

The presented report on the scientific contributions of Dr. Nakov's works includes areas of scientific, scientific-applied, clinical-diagnostic and clinical-therapeutic nature. The scientific researches cover scientific problems, aimed at a wide range of highly relevant and significant problems in the field of the scientific specialty of the announced competition. The main thematic directions of the candidate's scientific research activity unite the achievements of his overall creative and professional path, with public health and mental health, and can be separated into the following directions:

1. *Organization of health care and in particular psychiatric care, legislation, patients' rights and stigma in patients with mental illnesses.*

Dr. Nakov's contributions in this direction are related to the rights of patients with mental illnesses, organization of the activities of institutions for long-term accommodation of persons with these illnesses, dementia and other problems.

2. *Clinical-therapeutic and clinical-diagnostic studies.*

Publications, presentations and participation in scientific meetings in this field cover a wide range of mental illnesses and diagnostic problems, also targeting general practitioners.

3. *Epidemiological studies in the field of suicidology and mental illness.*

Scientific contributions in the field of mental health have a high degree of scientific representativeness and international significance. Most of them have been published in

prestigious scientific publications. Particular attention is paid to the problem of suicides in Bulgaria, presented in two monographs: "Suicides in Bulgaria 2009-2013" and "Suicides in Bulgaria. Historical context. Actual data". The applicant has a personal contribution to collect and summarize the information as he is responsible for the web-based portal for suicidal acts. An essential part of Dr. Nakov's research activity is epidemiological research on common mental disorders (depression, generalized anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder). In this regard, two large-scale epidemiological studies were conducted and analyzed. The data collected allow an assessment of the etiology of mental disorders, environmental factors, traumatic life events and impairments in social functioning, as well as the needs for psychiatric care and psychiatric services.

4. History of medicine and psychiatry.

The candidate presents an analysis of historical data on the development of psychiatry, which traces the construction of the psychiatric network, personnel, activities, etc. Particular attention is paid to the insufficient commitment of the state regarding the functioning of psychiatric services.

5. Public health, crises, the COVID-19 pandemic.

This section includes publications that are aimed at training employees of public organizations on mental health issues in registration and reception centers for asylum seekers and special homes for temporary accommodation of foreigners in Bulgaria. For the first time in Bulgaria, the question of the legal regulation of medical marijuana and the possibility of it being used for medicinal purposes has been raised. Themes related to "paradise gas" were developed, as well as a model for a low-threshold methadone maintenance treatment program primarily aimed at harm reduction from drug use. A scientific contribution is the analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the Bulgarian population.

The candidate's works have been published in prestigious scientific publications at home and abroad, such as: Bulgarian Journal of Public Health, Social Medicine, Depression and Anxiety, European Psychiatry, Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, Psychiatria Danubina. Evidence of the quality of the publications and their reflection in the international and Bulgarian scientific literature is presented. The reference presented by Dr. Nakov from the Central Medical Library for citations by Bulgarian and foreign authors contains 143 citations in the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

Dr. V. Nakov actively participates as an expert and coordinator in 8 national and international scientific projects and programs.

Conclusion

Based on the materials presented in the competition and the analysis of the assets in the research activity, I give a high rating to the Assistant Professor Vladimir Venkov Nakov, MD, PhD. By all indicators, he fully meets the quantitative and qualitative indicators and criteria for the academic position "Associate Professor". In connection with the above, I recommend to the esteemed scientific jury, of Assistant Professor Vladimir Venkov Nakov, MD, PhD, to be awarded the academic position " Associate Professor ", field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine, in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management", for the needs of the "Mental Health" Department, Directorate "Mental Health and Addiction Prevention" at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis.

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Prof. Plamen Dimitrov, MD, PhD