

## **OPINION**

### **On the Competition for the Position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 7.1**

#### **Medicine (Internal Medicine)**

This opinion has been prepared in relation to the competition for the position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 7.1 Medicine (Internal Medicine), announced for the needs of the Faculty of Medicine at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." The competition was announced in the State Gazette, issue 38 from 30.04.2024, as well as on the websites of the Faculty of Medicine and Sofia University.

**This opinion was prepared by Prof. Dr. Ivo Petrov, MD, PhD, in my capacity as the chairman of the scientific jury for the competition,** in accordance with Order No. RD-38-357 from 05.07.2024, issued by the Rector of Sofia University, Sofia. The basis for this opinion are the documents provided on an electronic medium for all participants in the procedure, submitted in accordance with the competition requirements.

#### **Participants in the Competition**

The following candidates submitted documents for participation in the announced competition:

1. Assistant Professor Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova, MD, PhD
2. Dr. Nonka Nikolova Yurukova, MD
3. Dr. Marian Yordanov Mihaylov – Dr. Mihaylov submitted a written request to withdraw from the competition to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

#### **I. General Description of the Submitted Materials**

**For Candidate: Assistant Professor Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova, MD, PhD**

##### **1. Candidate's Information**

Assistant Professor Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova, MD, PhD, has submitted all required materials and documents within the specified timeframe, in accordance with the template and requirements related to the application for the academic position of Associate Professor. The documents submitted by her include 18 types of materials in hard copy, which are well-organized and adequately illustrate her professional career and scientific achievements. The candidate's self-assessment report indicates that she meets the minimum national requirements as regulated by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for its implementation (PPRASRB), as well as the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Occupying Academic Positions at

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (PURPNZSADSU). The submitted documents comply with all regulatory requirements and demonstrate a high level of professionalism and academic integrity.

## **2. Candidate's Background**

Dr. Valentina Reshkova was born in 1973 in Dupnitsa. She began her medical education at the Medical University, Sofia, and graduated in 1998 as a physician. She completed part of her pre-graduation internship at the prestigious Cochin University Hospital, affiliated with the Cochin Faculty of Medicine of the René Descartes Medical University in Paris, France, which significantly enriched her clinical and academic experience. In the same year, she started working as a physician at the Rheumatology Clinic of the University Hospital "St. Ivan Rilski" while simultaneously developing her skills and competencies at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Faculty of Medicine and the Pierre and Marie Curie University Hospital in Paris.

Her international specialization contributed significantly to broadening her clinical experience and scientific potential, placing her at a global level in rheumatology. In 2008, Dr. Reshkova acquired the clinical specialty of "Rheumatology," and in the following years, she actively participated in numerous clinical studies that contributed to her professional growth and establishment as an expert in her field.

Her academic career began in 2013 in the Department of Internal Medicine at the Medical University – Sofia. In 2013, Dr. Reshkova obtained the academic degree "Doctor," and in 2020 she successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, acquiring the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in the Rheumatology program at the Medical University – Sofia.

Dr. Reshkova actively invests in her professional development through participation in numerous international courses and trainings aimed at enhancing her qualifications and expanding her expertise in medical science. Among these courses are:

- Joint Ultrasound Course, Medical University – Sofia, 2009
- Joint Ultrasound Course under the auspices of the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR), 2011
- Training Course on Psoriatic Arthritis, Athens, 2015
- Training Course on Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Sofia, 2018
- International Course on MRI and Ultrasound, Pravets, 2019
- International Capillaroscopy Course under the auspices of EULAR, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2022.
- Training course in the field of interventional pulmonary disease, Basel, Switzerland, 2023.

Dr. Reshkova is an active member of numerous national and international scientific organizations, including the Bulgarian Society of Rheumatology, the Bulgarian Scientific Society of Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis, and the World Osteoporosis Organization. In 2022, she was elected a member of the Board of the Bulgarian Medical Society for Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis, and Other Rheumatic Diseases, which is a recognition of her contributions and active involvement in the development of medical science in Bulgaria and beyond.

### **3. General Characteristics of the Candidate's Scientific Works and Achievements**

Dr. Valentina Reshkova has presented a rich portfolio of scientific publications and research achievements in support of her candidacy for the academic position of "Associate Professor." Her scientific output includes 29 full-text publications in peer-reviewed Bulgarian and international journals, with Dr. Reshkova being the first author in 17 of them. Additionally, she is the author of 6 publications in indexed journals with an impact factor, of which 5 are under her primary authorship. Dr. Reshkova has also published 22 articles in non-peer-reviewed journals, in 21 of which she is the main author. Her scientific activity is further complemented by 57 participations with reports and posters at national and international scientific conferences, where she is the first author in 51 of these participations. Some of these participations include reports published in international journals with an impact factor, highlighting the significance and international recognition of her work.

Dr. Reshkova's peer-reviewed articles represent a significant contribution to the development of Bulgarian and global medical science, expanding knowledge in the field of rheumatology and chronic pain management. In support of her scientific authority, a citation report from the Central Medical Library (CML) of the Medical University – Sofia, is presented, accounting for 56 citations in the international database Scopus, 54 citations in Web of Science, 24 citations in other online databases, and 48 citations in Bulgarian sources. These metrics attest to the high scientific value and impact of her publications.

Throughout her academic career, Dr. Reshkova has participated in 7 scientific projects, having been the leader of one of them. The total number of points Dr. Reshkova has accumulated, according to the report on meeting the minimum national requirements, amounts to 4,260 points. This result exceeds tenfold the minimum threshold of 400 points required for obtaining the academic position of "Associate Professor" in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its Regulations, and the corresponding criteria of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

### **4. Content Analysis of the Candidate's Scientific and Research Achievements**

The main scientific activity of Dr. Valentina Reshkova is focused on internal medicine,

with a strong emphasis on rheumatology. She is recognized as a leading national expert in the field of fibromyalgia—a chronic condition that causes widespread musculoskeletal pain, often accompanied by fatigue, sleepiness, and emotional difficulties. Dr. Reshkova defended her doctoral dissertation on "Investigation and Analysis of Painful Points in Patients with Fibromyalgia Treated with Different Groups of Medications," which she later expanded with a second dissertation on "Clinical Characteristics and Neuroendocrine Changes in Primary and Secondary Fibromyalgia." In her habilitation work "Advances in Fibromyalgia," she summarizes and synthesizes current knowledge about the disease, including data from her own studies among the Bulgarian population, which represent a valuable scientific contribution.

Another significant area of Dr. Reshkova's scientific interest is the study, management, and treatment of pain, including acute and chronic pain associated with the musculoskeletal system. Her studies cover both specific aspects of pain and its comprehensive treatment through a multidisciplinary approach involving specialists from various medical fields.

Dr. Reshkova's research also has a broader medical scope, examining the systemic impact of rheumatic diseases on various internal organs. She conducts joint studies and presents clinical cases related to pulmonology, cardiology, hepatology, and other medical disciplines, which enriches the clinical database and demonstrates the interdisciplinary approach in her research.

The presented citations are evidence of Dr. Reshkova's scientific authority and the international recognition of her and her team's work. Her participation in university projects is focused on the study of the etiology and clinical course of chronic pain syndromes, autoimmune diseases, vasculitis, and genetic markers for predisposition and clinical activity in systemic lupus erythematosus. The published results of these projects are a valuable source of information for doctors, including general practitioners, neurologists, and specialists in internal medicine, supporting the diagnosis and treatment of systemic diseases and chronic pain syndromes. The research results are presented at national and international conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals, highlighting their scientific and practical significance.

## **5. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Candidate's Teaching Activity**

Dr. Valentina Reshkova is an established lecturer with many years of experience in the academic field. For years, she has held a position in the Department of Internal Medicine at the Medical University of Sofia, and she is currently part of the Department of Rheumatology. In her academic position as a Senior Assistant, Dr. Reshkova performs important and diverse teaching duties, including conducting practical exercises and lectures for medical and pharmacy students in both Bulgarian and English. Her teaching activities cover the disciplines of "Internal Medicine" and "Rheumatology," with her annual workload ranging between 400 and 600 hours over the past five years.

The candidate actively participates in postgraduate education, leading basic and specialized courses in internal medicine and rheumatology. In addition, Dr. Reshkova gives lectures to fifth-year students in internal medicine, providing in-depth preparation and practical knowledge to future doctors. Her teaching activities are also complemented by her participation in examination committees for semester exams in internal medicine for fifth-year medical students in both Bulgarian and English, emphasizing her role as an expert in assessing students' knowledge and skills.

From 2019 to 2024, Dr. Reshkova demonstrated an impressive total workload of 2,597 hours of classroom teaching, which testifies to her significant teaching commitment. She is also included in the lecturer pool for theoretical training of residents in internal medicine, as well as for residents in rheumatology. This involvement underscores her contribution to the development of specialized training and the professional growth of young doctors.

Dr. Reshkova not only imparts knowledge but also actively collaborates with young scientists and PhD students, participating in joint publications. This activity is key to encouraging the academic development of young specialists and building a research environment that fosters innovation and knowledge exchange.

## **6. Conclusion for the Candidacy**

After a thorough review of the materials and scientific works presented in the competition by Dr. Nonka Yurukova, MD, and based on the analysis of their significance and the scientific and applied contributions they contain, I conclude that the presented scientific achievements are insufficient to meet the necessary requirements according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), its Regulations, and the corresponding Regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the relevant scientific field and professional direction of the competition.

Despite Dr. Yurukova's experience and professional involvement, the lack of significant publication activity, limited participation in scientific projects, and insufficient contribution to academic training in the form of developing teaching aids do not allow for a positive assessment of the candidacy. Therefore, taking all these circumstances into account, I give my negative assessment of Dr. Nonka Yurukova's candidacy for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the current competition procedure.

## **II. General Conclusion**

### **Comparative Analysis of the Scientific and Academic Achievements of the Candidates**

In the current competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 7.1 Medicine (Internal Medicine), the candidacies of Senior Assistant

Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova, MD, PhD, and Dr. Nonka Yurukova, MD, were presented. Both candidates demonstrate different approaches in their scientific and teaching activities, reflecting their individual contributions to medical science and education.

### **Scientific Works and Contributions**

Dr. Valentina Reshkova presents a rich portfolio of scientific works, including a significant number of publications in peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journals, participation in international conferences, and high citation rates in prestigious databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Her scientific work focuses on rheumatology and the management of chronic pain, establishing her as a leading national expert in the field of fibromyalgia. Her research is characterized by a systematic approach, innovation, and high applicability in clinical practice, supported by a variety of international courses and training. These characteristics highlight Dr. Reshkova's ability to enrich contemporary medical science with new knowledge and practical solutions.

On the other hand, Dr. Nonka Yurukova presents a more limited number of scientific publications, some of which do not meet the requirements for documentary accuracy. Although Dr. Yurukova has conducted research in the fields of gastroenterology and liver transplantation, there is a lack of quantitative and qualitative enhancement of her publication activity following her attainment of the "Doctor" degree. While her works cover topics such as metabolic syndrome and complications from COVID-19 in liver transplant patients, these studies are not characterized by high citation rates and scope, which limits the impact of her scientific achievements.

### **Teaching Activity**

Dr. Reshkova has extensive experience teaching medical and pharmacy students in the Department of Internal Medicine and the Department of Rheumatology, where she is noted for her active participation in classroom activities and examination committees. She also participates in the training of residents and PhD students, contributing to the development of the next generation of doctors and scientists.

Dr. Yurukova also has significant teaching experience, but primarily within classroom duties, without participation in the development of teaching materials and methodological aids. This shows a certain lack of activity in innovative teaching and the development of the educational process, which is an important aspect of the academic career of an "Associate Professor."

## **Conclusion and Evaluation of the Candidacies**

Based on the materials and scientific works presented for the competition, as well as the analysis of their significance and the scientific contributions they contain, I rank the candidates as follows:

- 1. Senior Assistant Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova, MD, PhD, DSc**
- 2. Dr. Nonka Yurukova, MD**

Dr. Valentina Reshkova demonstrates an impressive scientific contribution, active publication activity, and significant teaching engagement, which clearly meets the high requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor." On the other hand, despite Dr. Yurukova's professionalism, her candidacy shows limitations in scientific and academic activity, which does not allow it to be evaluated as competitive in this competition.

In conclusion, I give my positive assessment for Senior Assistant Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova, MD, PhD, DSc, and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for awarding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 7.1 Medicine (Internal Medicine) to Dr. Valentina Simeonova Reshkova.

**August 29, 2024**

**Opinion prepared by: .....**

**Prof. Dr. Ivo Petrov, MD, PhD, DSc**