

## REVIEW

by

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**About:** Competition for an Associate Professor academic position in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sport; professional sphere 7.1. Medicine; in the scientific field of Hygiene for the needs of the Faculty of Public Health, Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, and general hospital positions in the General Administration of St. Marina University Hospital, announced in State Gazette, issue 8/28.01.2020.

By an ordinance № P-109-178 from 03.06. 2020 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna and protocol № 149/19.03.2020 of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Public Health at the Medical University of Varna I was assigned the task of preparing a review about a competition for an academic position Associate Professor in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sport; professional sphere 7.1. Medicine; in the scientific field of Hygiene at the Faculty of Public Health, Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, and general hospital positions in the General Administration of St. Marina University Hospital.

The sole candidate is Lili Slavcheva Trifonova, MD, PhD.

### **1. Short Biography and Information About the Career Path of the Candidate**

Dr. Lili Slavcheva Trifonova graduated from the Medical University of Varna in 1987. Until 1990 she was an intern at the Third Internal Department at the Municipal Hospital of Targovishte, and in 1990 she started working as a clinical intern at the Department of Internal Diseases at the Higher Medical Institute in Varna. Since November, 1992 until now, after winning a competition, she has been working as a dietician at St. Marina University Hospital, Varna. In 2015 she became a part-time teaching assistant at the Department of Propedeutics of Internal Diseases, and in 2017 – full-time teaching assistant at the Second Department of Internal Diseases, ES of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, at MU-Varna.

In 1996, she acquired a specialty in Internal Diseases, in 2004 – Health Management at the University of Economics – Varna. In 2006 followed a specialty in Nutrition and Dietetics. In 2018, she acquired a PhD in Gastroenterology after successfully defending her thesis titled: Optimization of the Clinical Approach and Diet Therapy in Gluten Enteropathy.

As seen from Cert. № 564/07.02.2020 by the date of the competition Dr. Trifonova has had a work experience of 32 years, 2 months, and 13 days. Dr. Lili Trifonova is a doctor with a long-standing practice and significant scientific results in the field of nutrition and dietetics, gastroenterology and hepatology, and has actively been participating in the diagnostic and consultation activities at the Clinic of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition from 1992 to the present moment. She is the first physician in Varna with more than 28 years of experience in clinical dietetics.

Dr. Trifonova has worked for more than 25 years on the problems of diet and medical nutrition in different diseases. She has actively participated in the therapeutic and diagnostic process at the Clinic of Hepatogastroenterology and Nutrition at St. Marina University Hospital, Varna.

Her scientific interests are related to the problems of obesity and the concomitant diseases. She has a certificate in obesity treatment. The fields in which Dr. Trifonova has a

special interest are: parenteral and enteral feeding, eating disorders (anorexia nervosa, bulimia, orthorexia), and diet therapy in gluten enteropathy. She develops individual diet plans for patients with chronic inflammatory bowel diseases, diseases of the hepatobiliary system, and for patients after surgical interventions.

She has participated as a co-researcher in 4 clinical studies of drugs for the treatment of hepatitis B and follow-up of patients with cirrhotic changes of the liver, treatment of pancreatic insufficiency with enzyme medicaments, and pancreatic enzymes in the treatment of children with cystic fibrosis. Dr. Trifonova has participated in the development of nutritional regimens for adolescents, which is part of the "I Am Successful" program of the Varna Municipality, a pamphlet for diet regimen in patients with pancreatic diseases. She also prepares statements on the nutrition at various hospitals and sanatoriums.

Dr. Lili Slavcheva Trifonova is a member of the National Society of Nutrition and Dietetics, the National Society of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, BMA, and the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

## **2. General Description of the Presented Materials and Coverage of the Sciencemetric Criteria**

For her participation in the competition, Dr. Trifonova has presented 40 scientific publications as follows: 1 monograph, 19 articles in scientific journals, included in the academic reference from MU-Varna with reg. № 81/28.02.2020, and 12 scientific publications outside the academic reference; dissertation and dissertation summary; 3 publications presented for her PhD defense; 1 book on the basis of the dissertation, and 2 textbooks.

Out of all presented publications, after excluding the dissertation, dissertation summary, and the publications for the PhD defense, 35 comply with the category of Scientific Work.

Out of these publications, 32 are present in the digital reference from NACID as proof of fulfilling the minimum requirements for obtaining the academic position Associate Professor according to LDASRB from 2018. According to the reference 5 are full-text publications in scientific journals included or indexed in international databases, and 26 are full-text articles in non-indexed journals with peer review.

Out of the presented 35 scientific publications, in 18 Dr. Trifonova is the sole or first author (51.43%), in 2 of the articles is a second author (5.71%), and third or subsequent author – in 15 publications, which represents 42.86% of the total number. This fact underscores the leading role of the candidate in the presented scientific works.

Twenty-one proceedings and posters from national and international congresses and conferences are presented as well.

In the academic reference with a reg. № 121/24.03.2020 prepared by MU-Varna it is seen that Dr. Trifonova has been cited or reviewed 8 times, of which: 6 citations in non-indexed journals with peer review and 2 reviews in non-indexed journals with peer review.

The presented by the candidate publications for participation in the competition, as a number and category, completely comply with the recommended quantitative sciencemetric criteria for the academic position Associate Professor accepted at MU-Varna defined in Regulations to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Varna.

## **3. Quality Assessment of the Scientific Work and Contributions**

In the presented by Dr. Trifonova scientific production and results from scientific research, 10 topics are defined: Gluten-Related Disorders and Gluten-Free Diet. Modern

Indications; Gluten Enteropathy. Scientific Data and Real Proof; Gluten Enteropathy - a Potentially Curable Cause of Liver Damage; Gluten-Free Diet – Social Burden and the Impact on the Quality of Life of Patients with Gluten Enteropathy. Case Reports; Gluten Enteropathy and Concomitant Diseases; Antioxidants, Diet, Prevention; Pregnancy and Gluten Enteropathy; Enteral Feeding, Functional Foods, Problems of Diet Regimens in Some Hospitals in Varna; Chronic Kidney Diseases, Diagnostic Criteria, Diet Regimens, Nutritional Status Assessment and Quality of Life; Digestive Enzymes; A Healthy Diet as an Alternative to the Modern Lifestyle.

Dr. Trifonova's **scientific contribution** can be outlined based on the separate topics. The presented monograph is a contribution of **theoretical nature**:

- *Gluten-Related Disorders and Gluten-Free Diet. Modern Indications*

The monograph is dedicated to a relevant problem in medical practice. This is the first handbook in Bulgaria, which includes all aspects of gluten-related disorders. It presents thoroughly and knowledgeably the problems of the epidemiology, the most recent scientific views of the pathogenesis, genetic predisposition, clinical presentation, the difficulties in the diagnosis and differentiation of the separate gluten-related conditions. The newest immunological markers, the role of histomorphological testing and genetic testing are examined. The link between gluten enteropathy and other immune-mediated diseases is analyzed. Practical indications for an adequate gluten-free diet are provided as well as the content of many foods and products suitable for an effective and gluten-free diet.

Special attention is paid to gluten-related disorders in childhood and gluten-related disorders such as: gluten sensitivity, wheat allergy, Baker's asthma, and different types of non-IgE-mediated allergic disorders, such as eosinophilic esophagitis, eosinophilic gastroenteritis, and colitis. The most current non-dietetic means are examined as well as their pathogenetic mechanisms as a possible future challenge in the treatment of gluten-related disorders. The monograph represents a complete scientific work, which, for the first time in Bulgaria, includes all aspects of the problem.

With a high significance to the medical practice are Dr. Trifonova's contribution of **theoretical, methodological and practical nature**:

- *Gluten Enteropathy. Scientific Data and Real Proof*

The book presents the newest scientific facts related to the pathogenesis of one of the most widely spread autoimmune intestinal disorders, especially in adults, which is easily overlooked by clinicians. The role of the gut microbiota in the pathogenesis of gluten enteropathy, the relationship between the microbiota and the genetics of the host, the role of the microbiota in the homeostasis, and the link between genetic sensitivity and dysbiosis are presented in detail. Strategies and possibilities for the modulation of the gut microbiota as a therapeutic and preventive approach are indicated. The book presents also the hematologic changes, which sometimes are the only presentation of the disease, providing an opportunity of increasing the diagnostic frequency of gluten enteropathy. Dr. Trifonova's long-standing experience is included – a thorough study of a relatively big group of patients (134) analyzed in detail based on demographic, clinical, laboratory, immunologic, and histomorphological indicators.

- *Gluten Enteropathy - a Potentially Curable Cause of Liver Damage*

Theoretical and practical conclusions in regard to liver dysfunction in patients with gluten enteropathy following a gluten-free diet are drawn. Clinicians, especially general

practitioners, who are usually the first line of care, are provided with clear practical advice on treating refractory hypertransaminasemia and focusing on the diagnosis of gluten enteropathy in the absence of other causes of liver dysfunction.

- *Gluten-Free Diet – Social Burden and the Impact on the Quality of Life of Patients with Gluten Enteropathy. Case Reports*

The quality of life of those affected by gluten enteropathy is still compromised and the change in the psychological state of the patients, their acceptance of the disease and the overall outlook undergo a constant evolution. Based on the clinical experience and direct observation of patients, factors, which participate in the perceived quality of life, are outlined: awareness of the disease; social burden; quality of life and coping strategies. For the first time in Bulgaria, strategies for overcoming the deteriorated quality of life in these patients are suggested. The target therapeutic intervention by trained specialists is examined in order to improve the adherence to the gluten-free diet and to increase the psychological wellbeing of the patients.

- *Gluten Enteropathy and Concomitant Diseases*

The clinical aspects of toxic cholestatic hepatitis induced with acitretin in a patient with psoriasis are examined. The article draws conclusions related to the proper patient selection, careful assessment of the benefit/risk in patients treated with acitretin with the aim of monitoring aminotransferases and cholestatic enzymes, and the timely treatment of drug-induced hepatitis.

- *Antioxidants, Diet, Prevention*

The articles present a thorough study of scuba divers, subjected to increased resistance when breathing, low temperatures, high partial pressure of oxygen, and other physiological changes accompanying diving and provoking oxidative stress. There are recommendations for the inclusion of fresh fruits and vegetables in the daily menu of scuba divers in order to increase the antioxidant defense.

- *Pregnancy and Gluten Enteropathy*

The article presents the most frequent disorders during pregnancy – severe iron-deficiency anemia, spontaneous abortions, giving birth to children with lower birth weight and height. There is an analysis of the nutrition in the prenatal period and specific indications for a proper nutritional status during pregnancy and breastfeeding are provided. The author's personal experience is shared.

The **practical contribution** of Dr. Trifonova's work can be outlined:

- *Enteral Feeding, Functional Foods, Problems of Diet Regimens in Some Hospitals in Varna*

The enteral feeding of seriously ill patients in comatose states has special requirements. The articles include a study of patients treated at St. Marina University Hospital in Varna for a period of 3 months and Queen Giovanna University Hospital in Sofia, for a period of 30-40 days, who were treated with instant wholegrain flours. Clinical observation shows that instant flours are a valuable and indispensable part of the complex treatment and have a favorable pharmacoeconomic effect for hospitals. The articles present a detailed analysis on the basis of the calculated chemical content and energy levels of the most frequently applied diets. Described is also experimental testing of products made from wholegrain flour and wheat bran, given to hospitalized and ambulatory patients with a significant effect. In hospitalized

patients, there were observations of their use in tube-fed patients (no formation of separate layers) as part of the complex treatment.

- *Chronic Kidney Diseases; Diagnostic Criteria, Diet Regimens, Nutritional Status Assessment and Quality of Life*

The articles contain an assessment of the nutritional status, diagnostic criteria are developed, as well as diet regimens and an assessment of the quality of life of patients undergoing kidney function replacement therapy

- *Digestive Enzymes*

A contemporary concept in regard to the content, structure and the role of digestive enzymes on human health is suggested. A new approach to their classification is used and detailed characterization of the enzymes is done. Advice on the daily consumption of unprocessed food is provided.

- *A Healthy Diet as an Alternative to the Modern Lifestyle*

The articles deal with the problems of overweight and obesity, as well as the increasing sedentary lifestyle among adolescents, developing concepts for overcoming it and offering specific diet regimens.

#### **4. Teaching Activities**

It is seen in the academic reference with a reg. № 112-48/11.02.2020 that Dr. Trifonova started her teaching career in October, 2015 as a part-time teaching assistant at the Department of Propedeutics of Internal Diseases, teaching third-year medical students.

In 2017 she became a full-time teaching assistant at the Second Department of Internal Diseases, ES of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, teaching fifth-year medical students.

Since October, 2017 she has been teaching a course in bromatology to second-year assistant pharmacists.

In the winter term of 2019 she became a lecturer and examiner in the discipline Medical Nutrition – online training of nurses and midwives at the affiliates of the Medical University of Varna in Shumen, Veliko Tarnovo, and Sliven, with an average load of 260 classes, which exceeds the accepted norm of 220.

Dr. Trifonova is also a lecturer in course for physicians specializing in Gastroenterology and Hepatology as well as in a highly specialized-activity course titled – Stem Cell Transplantation.

She is also included in the preparation of curricula and tests, actively participating in exam commissions during term examinations.

Dr. Trifonova is a scientific consultant of Dr. Petar Petrov – a post-graduate in Second Department of Internal Diseases, ES of Nephology and Dialysis.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The presented documents confirm the rich clinical experience, the productive scientific research work, professional competences, and teaching experience of Dr. Trifonova.

The analysis of the overall research, publishing and teaching activities of ass. Dr. Trifonova allows me to state that they completely comply with the scientometric criteria for the academic position Associate Professor required by Regulations to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Varna and the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Based on the aforementioned, I provide my positive assessment and recommend that the Scientific Jury vote IN FAVOR of granting the academic position ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR to DR. LILI SLAVCHEVA TRIFONOVA in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sport; professional sphere 7.1. Medicine; in the scientific field of Hygiene for the needs of the Faculty of Public Health, Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, and general hospital positions in the General Administration of St. Marina University Hospital.

22.07.2020

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