

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Katya Koycheva Vangelova, PhD

**on the competition for holding the academic position of "Professor",
Field of higher education 7. "Health and Sports", professional field 7.1 "Medicine",
specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management", announced in State Gazette No.
99/26.11.2021 for the needs of the Department of Mental Health, Directorate of Mental
Health and Addiction Prevention, National Center of Public Health and Analyses**

Within the established term documents for participation in the competition were submitted by one candidate Assoc. Prof. Hristo Ruskov Hinkov, MD, PhD, Director of the National Center of Public Health and Analyses (NCPHA), who was admitted to participate in the competition.

I. Qualification and professional development

Hristo Ruskov Hinkov was born on March 25, 1953. In 1980 he graduated from the Medical Academy - Sofia. In 1987 he acquired a medical degree in Psychiatry, and in 2002 he completed a master's program in Health Management at Burgas State University. In 2011 he obtained an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" after completing PhD on "Mental health services in Bulgaria - availability, accessibility, turnover, efficiency" in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Organization of Health and Pharmacy". He has several long trainings in European countries, the USA and Japan. In 2013, Dr. Hinkov won a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor at the NCPHA.

The career of Assoc. Prof. Hristo Hinkov began as a general practitioner at the Municipal Hospital in Botevgrad, in the period 1983-1987 he worked as a resident psychiatrist at the State Psychiatric Hospital in Novi Iskar. From 1987 to 1988 Assoc. Prof. Hinkov held the position of Research Fellow at the Medical Academy, University Psychiatry Hospital, Department of Addictions, and in the period 1988 - 1997 he worked as Head of Psychiatric Consulting Room "Emergency psychiatric conditions with somatic complications, suicide attempts, crisis interventions" at the Pirogov Hospital for active treatment and emergency medicine (HATEM) in Sofia. During the period 1997 - 1999 Hinkov worked in the Ministry of Health as Head of Department "Projects, Programs and International Cooperation", 1999 - 2001 in the National Health Insurance Fund, Central Office as Deputy Director of Human Resources and Training, and from 2001 to 2008 as Chief expert in the NCPHA in the field of "Mental Health Policy, Programs and Projects". Since 2008 he has been the head of the Global Mental Health Section at the NCPHA, and in the period 2009-2011 he was also Vice-Director of the NCPHA. From 2011 to 2014 Hinkov was Head of the Mental Health Sector and coordinated National programs, projects, international cooperation in the field of mental health. From 2014 until now, Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is the Director of the NCPHA.

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is the leader of more than 20 projects on various topics in the field of healthcare, a leading researcher for Bulgaria in the WHO World Mental Health Survey,

coordinated by the Universities of Harvard and Michigan. Assoc. Prof. Hinkov has significant managerial experience as Deputy Director of Human Resources and Training at the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), Vice-Director and Director of the NCPHA. He is a member of the boards of two regional medical institutions in Sofia and Ruse. He is a member of working groups on the drafting of the Health Insurance Act, the Medical Establishments Act, the Health Act, the Professional Organizations Act, and participates in the drafting of a number of regulations. Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is a chairman and member of commissions for accreditation of medical institutions and psychiatric hospitals.

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov has been a member of the initiative committee for the restoration of the Bulgarian Medical Association (BMA) since 1989, for several years he participated in the leadership of the BMA. He is also a member of the Bulgarian Psychiatric Organization, Bulgarian Collegium of Private Psychiatry, mental health coordinator of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network.

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is fluent in written and spoken English and Russian.

The materials and documents submitted by Assoc. Prof. Hristo Hinkov fully comply with the requirements for holding the academic position "Professor" set out in the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in NCPHA.

II. Research activity

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov, MD, PhD has 49 publications after acquiring the academic position of "Associate Professor". The main part of Assoc. Prof. Hinkov's publications are in prestigious scientific journals - 40 original articles in foreign journals, a significant part of them with an impact factor; H index = 22 by Web of Science and 24 by Scopus as of 10.03.2022. The publications after acquiring the academic position of "Associate Professor" are distributed as follows:

- ✓ Habilitation thesis: Bulgarian anxiety (Monograph, published by Context, Sofia 2022, ISBN 978-954-8361-34-7)
- ✓ Publications in foreign refereed and indexed journals, mainly with impact factor - 40 (BMC Psychiatry, Bipolar Disorders, Psychological Medicine, Depression and Anxiety, Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, JAMA Psychiatry, British Journal of Psychiatry, World Psychiatry, The Lancet Psychiatry, etc.)
- ✓ Publications in referenced and indexed Bulgarian journals - 5 (Mental Health, Bulgarian Journal of Public Health, Social Medicine)
- ✓ Chapter in a book - 1 (Trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder: global perspectives from the World Mental Health Surveys in Motor Vehicle Collisions);
- ✓ Publications in unrefereed journals and proceedings - 2.

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov's publications contain 2463 citations (Web of Science for the period 2014-2021).

A total of 68 participations in national and international scientific forums were presented, 9 after acquiring the academic position of Associate Professor, mostly reports at prestigious

international and national forums, in some Assoc. Prof. Hinkov participated also as a moderator, and some were held periodically.

The main **scientific contributions** of Assoc. Prof. Hinkov for the period 2014-2021 are in the following areas:

Epidemiology of mental disorders and study of the psychosocial determinants of mental illness

Scientific contributions in this field have a high degree of scientific representation, which is evident from the citations, for the first time in Bulgaria a significant epidemiological study was conducted within EPIBUL on anxiety, depressive, reactive and affective disorders, which are usually associated with stress and adverse life events, and the relative shares of different nosological units included in the questionnaire were determined. For the first time in our country it was found that the common mental disorders account for a significant share of the Bulgarian population - about 19%, which means that every fifth Bulgarian has suffered in his life from one or more of the nosological units included in the questionnaire, with the most common mental disorder being anxiety (11.4%), followed by mood disorders and psychoactive substances use, with some variation in frequency with the age. Comorbidity data make an important contribution, with 5.4% of people having two diseases and 1.9% having 3 or more diseases. Of interest are data on the high incidence of several mental illnesses for which there was a lack of information in the country, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), separation anxiety disorder and impulse control disorder, as well as dysthymia due to the severity of the disease in registered cases. (Publications № 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 40, 44, 45)

The contribution of Assoc. Prof. Hinkov regarding the treatment of common mental disorders (depression, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is significant, as problems related to seeking medical help and usability of mental health services are outlined. The introduction of quality characteristics for medical care as minimal adequate treatment for both pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy is of great importance. People with panic disorder most often receive medical treatment, followed by those with dysthymia with a depressive episodes and PTSD. People with generalized anxiety and phobias are two to three times less likely to be treated, and people with substance use disorders are less likely to receive treatment, too. (Publications № 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 28, 34, 35)

The contribution of the applicant is significant in relation with the assessment of various aspects of the etiology of mental disorders, environmental factors, traumatic life events and disorders of social functioning. Of interest are the data on the relative severity of PTSD and the reasons for their occurrence. Regarding the latter, the leading events are stressful events in the respondent's family and close environment (57.8%, of which 32% related to death and 26.7% related to events in the close environment); 17.4% to accidents; 9.8% to physical violence. From the last class, physical violence by a spouse or intimate partner, despite its low frequency of 1.4%, has a high potential for morbidity due to its long duration. The analysis of the psychological and socio-demographic predictors for the development of PTSD, as well as the prevention of addictions in view of their effect on morbidity and mortality is an important contribution. Special attention is paid to war-related trauma and the risk of deteriorating mental

health, including the long term effects. (Publications № 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32)

Comparative analysis of epidemiological databases

Significant contribution is that EPIBUL 1 with its representative sample makes it possible to make comparisons of the morbidity with other countries included in the World Mental Health Survey and to make a real assessment of the needs for mental care and psychiatric services and their usability. Of interest are the data on the disease prevalence and the prerequisites for this in countries with different living standards, countries with high incomes and such with low / medium incomes, in certain regions, religiosity, gender and age differences in morbidity. An important aspect is the comparative analysis of the disease prevalence in relation to education, employment and socio-economic status. (Publications № 4, 7, 13, 20, 21, 22, 24, 29, 31)

The applicant's contribution to the second nationally representative epidemiological study EPIBUL 2 (Program BG07 "Public Health Initiatives", with the financial support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area) in the period 2016-2017 is significant. On the same toolkit, the study allows for a comparative analysis of epidemiological data for a period of 10 years, outlining the dynamics of a slight decrease in the incidence of common mental disorders, with lifelong incidence of 14.5% and related to stress levels. Lifelong morbidity from common mental disorders is as follows: Anxiety disorders - 8.4%; Mood disorders - 4.5%; Abuse and dependence on alcohol and drugs - 4.76%, mainly on alcohol - 4.4%. An important contribution is made by the data on comorbidity, as with regard to anxiety disorders there is an increase in the percentage of additional diagnoses accompanying anxiety disorder from 21.2% to 28%, which shows that along with the main anxiety disorder concomitant mental disorders are diagnosed and manifested. (Publications № 42, 44, 45)

An important contribution of the applicant is the development of a hypothesis on reaction of Bulgarian population to stressful events, presented in the habilitation thesis monograph "Bulgarian anxiety". The author, looking at anxiety in a historical and philosophical context and based on a comparative analysis of two databases of epidemiological data on anxiety nationally and internationally, presents his hypothesis for somatization of anxiety, citing data on mental health and psychiatric care, as well as morbidity and mortality from psychosomatic diseases. The author makes an in-depth analysis of determinants of mental health, health risk factors, conditions and management of psychiatric and health care, including in a pandemic. (Habilitation thesis monograph, "Bulgarian Anxiety" published by Context 2022, reviewers Prof. G. Popov, Medical University - Varna and Prof. V. Stancheva Popkostadinova, South-West University – Blagoevgrad.

Scientific and applied contributions

An important scientific and applied contribution is the analysis of the provision of mental health services in Bulgaria, such as the legal framework, systems for medical and mental health services, information and financial support (Publications № 29, 30, 40).

The development of a model of mobile psychiatry and the analysis of the introduction of mobile teams in outpatient care for people with mental disorders in an international project are a

scientific basis for the concept of mobile psychiatry in outpatient care included in the action plan in the latest National Mental Health Strategy (2020-2030). A significant contribution to the scientific substantiation of the reorganization of psychiatric care is the construction of an evidence base for the application of new technologies in the care of those suffering from mental disorders (Publication №39).

Of interest is a comparative analysis of mental health and the organization of psychiatric care in Central and Eastern European countries, based on consensus criteria, and the specifics of the organization of psychiatric care in different countries and cultures, focusing on emerging plan for reform of the psychiatric system in Bulgaria (Publications № 19, 21).

The applicant's contribution to health policy and health reform is extremely large with a key role and participation in the development of the National Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan for a 10-year period and with practical, scientific and organizational issues (Publication № 42).

The contribution of the applicant for prevention of suicidal behavior among Bulgarian citizens is important. As a part of a project funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, an electronic data collection system has been set up not only for the suicidal acts, but also for suicide attempts, which is a very important basis for building an adequate preventive strategy. This ranks our country among the EU countries with good practices in this regard. The data show that the comorbidity of affective and anxiety disorders with other diseases is a strong predictor of suicidal ideation (Publication № 45).

The data on incapacity to work due to mental illness and lost days of inability to work due to health problems with an emphasis on mental symptoms are contribution, for the first time in our country on the basis of such extensive statistical evidence. The study gives a more complete picture because it includes not only the days of sick leave, but all days of incapacity for work, and shows features of the behavior of Bulgarians in seeking professional help in the direction of somatic specialists - neurologists, GPs, etc., explained simultaneously with the impact the stigma regarding mental disorders and the strong degree of somatization of mental problems among Bulgarians (Publication № 44).

Substantial scientific and applied contribution is related to the assessment of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Bulgarians and analysis of emerging mental states, including long-term, and possible ways to deal with them. An important aspect is the effect on somatic health (Publications № 46, 47).

The Recover-e project analyzed mental health policies and programs as key tools for setting strategic priorities, measures to coordinate and reduce the fragmentation of services and resources in the mental health system and the actual state of psychiatric services in the country (Publications № 47).

The applicant's contribution to the creation of a team of professionals engaged in the development and promotion of modern concepts of mental health and psychiatric care is serious, leading to the creation of a Mental Health and Addiction Prevention Directorate within NCPHA, without analogue in the country.

The contribution of Assoc. Prof. Hinkov as a participant in the National Commission for the Development of the Health Card to the Ministry of Health (2012-2016) and the participation of the applicant in the Commission for Health Technology Assessment (2016-2020) is important.

III. Teaching activities

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is the main coordinator of the expert council on the medical specialty of psychiatry at the Ministry of Health for the period 2019-2021. He is a lecturer at prestigious forums in the field of health management and mental health, giving lectures or plenary reports on scientific events at home and abroad.

He participates in the creation, implementation and development of virtual information and educational environments, systems and web-based courses such as training for general practitioners, psychologists and social workers on early detection of anxiety and depression in primary care as Project Manager "Improved Services for Mental Health", BG07 Program "Public Health Initiatives".

He supervised one PhD student and was co-supervisor of another, who also successfully completed PhD, as well as a supervisor of diploma theses.

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is a member of the Scientific Council of NCPHA, and for the period 2017-2018 of the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Environment and Water, and a member of the Executive Council of the National Scientific Program "Environmental Protection and Reduction of Risk of Adverse Events and Natural Disasters". He is a member of scientific juries for obtaining the degree of "Doctor" and "Doctor of Sciences", reviewer of a monograph, reviewer of research projects, dissertations and more.

Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is a member of national and international scientific societies, incl. in their leadership.

He is a member of the editorial board of two journals, Bulgarian Journal of Public Health and Mental Health, guest editor of the International Journal of Mental Health Systems - ISSN: 1752-4458.

Conclusion

Assoc. Prof. Hristo Hinkov is the only candidate in the competition for professor in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management". His work is presented with scientific publications on the state and determinants of mental health and psychiatric care, all with very high quality indicators and contributions, highly valued at home and abroad, as evident by the significant number of citations by foreign researchers. Assoc. Prof. Hinkov also presents a habilitation thesis in which he develops a hypothesis for high somatization of anxiety. Assoc. Prof. Hinkov's contribution to the development of the National Strategy for Mental Health of the Citizens of Republic of Bulgaria 2020-2030 and the development of a new scientific field in the NCPHA is significant. Assoc. Prof. Hinkov is a main coordinator of the Council in the medical specialty of psychiatry at the Ministry of Health, lecturer, supervisor of PhD students, and member of scientific juries and committees.

Given the qualities and importance of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Hristo Ruskov Hinkov, I consider that he meets all the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in NCPHA for scientific achievements and scientific-applied results and I suggest to the Distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to choose Assoc. Prof. Hristo Ruskov Hinkov as a professor in the field of higher education 7. "Health and Sports", professional field 7.1 "Medicine", specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management" for the needs Mental Health Department, Mental Health and Addiction Prevention Directorate at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis.

10.03.2022

Member of scientific jury according
order № RD-34/21.01.2022:



Assoc. Prof. Katya Vangelova, PhD