

OPINION

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Subject: Competition for the academic position of *Associate Professor* in the field of higher education area 7. *Healthcare and Sports*, professional field 7.1 *Medicine*, scientific specialty *Neurosurgery*, for the needs of Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov”, Burgas

Number of candidates: one

Candidate: Dr. Deyan Dimitrov Handzhiev, PhD, neurosurgeon at the Clinic of Neurosurgery, St. Anna University Hospital EAD, Varna

The competition was announced in State Gazette No. 42/43 dated 23.05.2025.

The scientific jury was approved by Order No. RD 265 of 23.07.2025 of the Rector of Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov”. All requirements and deadlines under the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the University Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov” have been duly observed. The documents and evidence submitted by the candidate have been reviewed and verified.

Dr. Deyan Dimitrov Handzhiev was born in 1973 in the town of Dobrich, where he completed his secondary education at the Language High School in his hometown. He obtained his higher medical education in Varna, graduating with a master’s degree from the Medical University “Paraskev Stoyanov”.

He began his professional career at the Emergency Medical Care Center in Dobrich, and was subsequently appointed to the Department of Neurosurgery in Dobrich. Later, after successfully passing a competition, he continued his professional work at the Clinic of Neurosurgery at St. Anna University Hospital in Varna and at St. Marina University Hospital in Varna.

In 2008, he obtained a specialty in Neurosurgery. In 2013, he earned a master’s degree in Health Management. At the same time, he serves as a National Neurosurgery Consultant for the Northeastern region of Bulgaria.

In 2015, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on the topic “*Angiogenesis in Glial Brain Tumors*” and was awarded the degree *Doctor of Medicine (PhD)*. In his dissertation, he examined for the first time in Bulgaria the growth factors **VEGF** and **bFGF** in patients with brain tumors. The studied series included a statistically significant number of patients — 96 cases.

A nonlinear regression mathematical model was developed, describing the relationship between the levels of the mentioned growth factors and the life expectancy of patients with multiform glioblastoma. For the first time in Bulgaria, the concentration of growth factors was compared between benign and malignant tumors, and the results were analyzed across three main tumor groups. A complex angiogenic analysis was carried out, including plasma and cerebrospinal fluid assessment of growth factors in patients with brain tumors and healthy controls.

In addition to the dissertation, Dr. Handzhiev presented to the jury an extensive body of scientific work. He submitted **62 publications**, cited in **31 publications** in Bulgaria and abroad, a published monograph based on his doctoral dissertation, and **two chapters** published in the *Textbook of Neurosurgery* issued last year.

He has published in a number of authoritative Bulgarian and international journals, including *Journal of Clinical Neuroscience*, *Journal of IMAB*, *Journal of Neurological Surgery A: Central European Neurosurgery*, and *Archives of the Balkan Medical Union*, all with high impact factors.

He has completed numerous specializations both in Bulgaria and abroad — in Sofia, Istanbul, Budapest, Koblenz, and Nicosia.

He has participated with reports in various national and international scientific conferences, documented by published abstracts.

He is fluent in Russian and English.

He was awarded a grant during 2004–2005 under the project "Medical Science Fund".

Dr. Handzhiev actively participates in the neurosurgical activity of his clinic, performing daily interventions in the field of major neurosurgery. He is also actively engaged in academic teaching, delivering lectures, practical exercises, and seminars for students and residents.

According to the evaluation criteria table under the Regulations of Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov", Dr. Handzhiev has achieved **1166 points**, exceeding the required minimum of **450 points**.

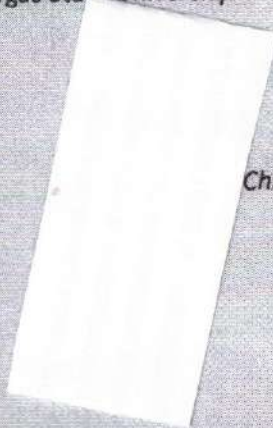
Conclusion:

Dr. Deyan Handzhiev is a highly qualified neurosurgeon, respected by his colleagues and esteemed by his patients. He is an accomplished researcher, proven in reputable scientific forums. His scientific output has been recognized with numerous citations. He is an experienced lecturer and an active participant in both professional and social organizations.

I am convinced that Dr. Deyan Handzhiev possesses all the qualities of a well-established professional with a strong inclination toward teaching and research. He meets the requirements of the ADASRB and the Regulations of Burgas State University, and I will gladly vote "YES" for him to be awarded the academic position of *Associate Professor* for the needs of Burgas State University.

October 2, 2025

Sofia



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