

## OPINION

by Stefka Nikolova Kasarova, PhD

Assoc. Prof. at Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov”

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition  
for the academic position of Associate Professor  
at Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov”  
in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports  
Professional Field 7.1. Medicine  
Scientific Specialty “Radiotherapy”

In the competition for Associate Professor, announced in State Gazette, issue 61/29.07.2025 and in the website of the Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov”, as a candidate participates MD Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, PhD.

### 1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

By order № ПД-345 of 30.09.2025 of the Rector of the Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov” I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in Burgas State University in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, Scientific Specialty “Radiotherapy”.

The only candidate who submitted documents for the participation in the competition is MD Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, PhD. The set of materials presented by the candidate (in hard-copy and electronic forms) is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Burgas State University, and includes all the necessary documents.

MD Kiril Zhelev has graduated from the Medical University of Varna, where in 2016 obtained a Master’s degree in Medicine. In 2022 he acquired specialty “Radiotherapy” in Medical University of Plovdiv and in 2024 he defended his dissertation for PhD degree on “Prognostic significance of neoadjuvant rectal score and its relationship with skeletal mus-

cle index in patients with rectal cancer treated with neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy” in the University Specialized Hospital for Active Treatment of Oncology Prof. Ivan Chernozemski. From 2017 to January 2025, he worked in the University Hospital St. Marina in Varna, MHAT Uni Hospital in Panagyurishte and Heart and Brain Center of Clinical Excellence, Pleven. MD Zhelev has been working as radiation therapist in Deva Maria University Hospital of Burgas since February 2025. Candidate presents certificates from 10 educational courses organized by European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology. In the period 2017 - 2019, MD Kiril Zhelev worked as an assistant in the specialty "Radiation Therapy" at the Department of Imaging Diagnostics, Interventional Radiology at the Medical University of Varna.

## **2. Assessment of the presented materials and scientometric indicators**

MD Kiril Zhelev participates in the current competition with 33 scientific publications that have not been used in the procedures for acquiring the PhD degree. Of these 33 articles, 10 are in journals included in the World databases of scientific information Web of Science and Scopus, 13 are conference reports indexed in Web of Science, and 10 are articles in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals. Publications B4 and Г7-11 as well as B6 and Г7-2 are with identical titles but the reference shows that the research topics are further developed in the newer versions. Scientific articles of candidate have 4 citation (without self-citations) 3 of which are in the journals with Q1 and high SJR.

With the submitted materials, the candidate MD Kiril Zhelev meets the minimum national requirements and additional requirements of the Burgas State University for the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 7.1 Medicine achieving the following points: **50 points** in Group A (minimum 50 points); **119.23 points** in Group B (minimum 100 points); **229.42 points** in Group Г (minimum 220 points); **60 points** in Group Д (minimum 60 points); **55 points** in Group Д (minimum 20 points) obtained from acquired medical specialty and participation in one national research or educational projects.

## **3. Assessment of scientific research**

Scientific interests of MD Kiril Zhelev are primarily focused on studying the response of patients with oncological diseases and survival after radiotherapy - alone or



combined with chemotherapy. In his works, the candidate applies statistical analysis methods to evaluate various prognostic factors. The scientific and scientific-applied contributions of MD Zhelev can be grouped into the following areas:

- Studying the role of temporal muscle thickness as a prognostic factor for sarcopenia in patients treated with radiotherapy, chemoradiotherapy or gamma knife radiosurgery.
- Evaluation of the relationship between the levels of the NANO scale and the overall response rate of patients to meningioma treatment.
- Studying the potential relationship between time estimation and psychological distress in patients with solid tumors prior to starting radiotherapy.
- Analysis of KRAS status as an independent prognostic factor for survival.
- Establishing a significant relationship between the levels of the maximum standardized accumulation value measured by PET/CT and the overall response rate after stereotactic radiosurgery.
- Investigation of the efficacy of concomitant immunotherapy or targeted therapy on the outcome after gamma knife radiosurgery.
- Evaluation of the relationship between blood neutrophils before treatment and neutrophil extracellular traps in biopsy specimens and their predictive value for progression-free survival.

#### **4. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I recommend Dr. Kiril Zhelev to publish the obtained scientific results in full-text articles in journals with higher scientometric indicators.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by MD Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, PhD meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its Regulations for the Implementation and the relevant Regulations of the Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov". He has presented a sufficient number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of the PhD. The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, all of which have been published in journals issued by international

academic publishing houses. The scientific qualification and personal contribution of MD Kiril Zhelev, PhD is undoubted and the achieved results exceed the minimum national requirements.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analysis of their significance and contained in them scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions, I find it reasonable to give my **positive** assessment and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine for election of MD Kiril Zhelev Zhelev, PhD to the academic position of „Associate Professor“ at the Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov” in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, Scientific Specialty “Radiotherapy”.

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**Opinion issued by:**

Assoc. Prof. Stefka Kasarova, PhD