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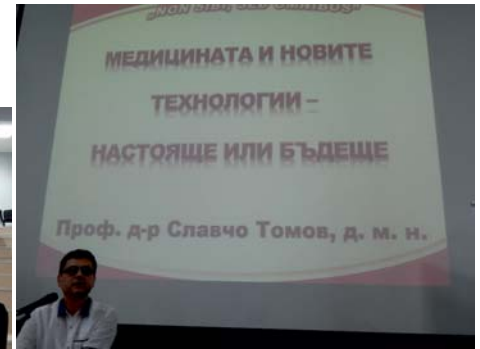
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## THE FIRST INFORMATION SESSION WITH POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AND YOUNG SCIENTISTS BASED ON A PROJECT TO SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT WAS HELD IN MU-PLEVEN

On June 28, 2017 in the Ambroise Pare Hall of the Telecommunication Endoscopic Center at MU-Pleven the first information meeting on the "Creation of a training center for PhD students, postgraduates and young scientists at the Faculty of Medicine, Pleven" project took place. It is developed under the "Science and Education for Smart Growth" Operational Program 2014-2020, co-funded by the European Union through the European Structural and Investment Funds. The grant for the project amounts to BGN 695,631.34 and it has a 24-month implementation period, ending on 31.12.2018.

The meeting was organized and conducted by the project team members: Prof. Maria Sredkova, Head of Project Management and Implementation; Prof. Dr. Galia Stavreva, Coordinator; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pencho Tonchev, Research Administrator; Anelia Lukanova, accountant, and Ilian Yonchev, lawyer. Many members of the audience were representative of the project target group, comprising a total of 84 persons, of which 29 doctoral students from the Faculty of Medicine at MU-Pleven; 40 postgraduates; 5 young scientists and 10 lecturers at the same faculty.

The Rector of MU-Pleven, Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov address to the young people was in the form of a presentation on "Medicine and New Technologies - Present or Future". His demonstration included a 3D video and references to the history of humanity, medicine and surgery, perpetuating his message that the technologies of the future and NASA today are actually applicable in medical science and practice - such as robotic surgery and 3D bio-printers of human organs and tissues. Most of these technologies of the future are already present at the Medical University of Pleven: 3D Medical Table for Virtual Dissections, Robot Assisted Surgery, HIFU Technologies and a 3D Studio for Live Surgery Demonstrations, which opens doors with the start of the new school year. All of them outline the innovative profile of MU-



Pleven, giving it a competitive advantage on the map of higher medical education not only in Europe but also around the world, attracting a growing number of Bulgarian and international students.

After the presentation of Prof. Tomov, each individual member of the Project team introduced the young audience to the different aspects of the activities in which they will take part and what benefits are expected for their scientific and professional careers. Prof. Maria Sredkova described in detail the six main activities envisaged in the Project, which will be implemented in the form of highly specialized courses on the following topics: "Developing a curriculum and conducting courses on key competences for a successful scientific career"; "Personalized approach in the pre-op and surgical treatment of patients through minimally invasive surgery, based on imaging reconstruction, 3D visualization and virtual simulations"; "Conducting training for participation and preparation of research projects, current proposals, technology transfer and intellectual property management"; practical training in the "Experimental Science" program; "Support for the individual scientific and career development of the target group" and "Active promotion of doctoral students, postgraduates and young scientists to potential employers and partners in future joint projects".

The chief objective of the project is to improve the established Postgraduate School of MU-Pleven with specific activities and courses necessary for the development of PhD students, specialists, young scientists and faculty members of the Faculty of Medicine. The aim is to create a Center for Support for the Development of PhD Students, Postgraduates and Young Scientists, which will ensure the high quality of their training in accordance with the needs of the labor market and the building of a knowledge-based economy.

*Original text in Bulgarian: V. Dukova*

## THE ADMISSION CAMPAIGN SESSION FOR "MEDICINE" AND "PHARMACY" SPECIALTIES AT MU-PLEVEN STARTED ON 5 JULY

The Admission Campaign for the specialties "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" at the Medical University-Pleven started on 5 July with the first biology exam. A total of 816 student candidates competed for 133 places, a state order, full-time training in both Majors, which makes an average of just over 6 candidates for one place.

Student candidates went through a special admission procedure to be allowed to enter the examination rooms. This was the first test of the University's new entry control system.

At 8:45 pm in Asclepius Hall, Candidate Student Pamela Krumova from Dupnitsa, chosen by lot, randomly picked version 12 of the Biology Exam Test for Medicine and Pharmacy. This was done in the presence of the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov; Deputy Rector of Educational Activities, Prof. Margarita Alexandrova; Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Asparuh Asparuhov; Deputy Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Dr. Pavlina Yordanova; Assoc. Prof. Milena Atanasova, Chair of the Evaluation Committee; Mrs. Virginia Lazarova, Chairperson of the Technical Commission for the Admission as well as parents of the candidates and members of the press.

The high-school graduates were congratulated by Prof. Tomov and Deputy Rector of Educational Activities, Prof. Margarita Alexandrova, who wished them success. The exam began at 9am and lasted 4 hours - up to 13am. The

applicants were distributed in 40 training halls on the territory of the Rectorate, buildings 1 and 2. In order to ensure the safe and smooth proceedings of the exam, 115 Quaestors - lecturers and university staff - attended and administered the event.

After the start of the admission exam for biology for the two master's specialties, a special press conference was held, attended by the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov; Deputy Rector of Educational Activities, Prof. Margarita Alexandrova; Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Asparuh Asparuhov; Deputy Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Dr. Pavlina Yordanova; Assoc. Prof. Milena Atanasova, Chair of the Evaluation Committee; Mrs. Virginia Lazarova, Chairperson of the Technical Commission for the Admission. For



the gathered journalists, the Rector commented that: "The Medical University of Pleven is a higher education institution, approached with great interest on the part of the candidate students - we are on the ridge of the wave." According to him, "the university has a successful student-candidate campaign, which continues to hold and increase the interest of the high-school graduates in the medical specialties and to collect a sufficient number of candidates against the backdrop of the great demographic crisis in Bulgaria. The university is developing as an innovative one and it is a successful practice because young people are very demanding - they react to the novelties and the modern tendencies in the sphere of medical education." Prof. Tomov noted that this year the number of candidates for the new specialty "Pharmacy" is considerably higher. He informed the media representatives that the form of the exams had changed, and tests for both biology and chemistry competitions were introduced. Prof. Tomov is convinced that the test as form of examination provides a more accurate selection of candidates. "The biology test includes textbook material for grades 8, 9 and 10 and is the best form of objective assessment of candidates' preparation," he said. The first part of the test was designed as closed - involving questions with only 1 correct answer, while the second part consisted of several open

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questions with more than one possible correct answer. "Open questions are included to allow candidates to present their way of thinking and their ability to formulate their thoughts in writing," Prof. Slavcho Tomov explained.

The Rector specified that the increased number of applicants for MU-Pleven has been a trend since 2010. The last two years - 2016 and 2017 - set a record in the number of applicants. This year, a total of 816 candidate students will compete for 133 places, a state order, full-time training in the subjects of "Medicine" and "Pharmacy", with six students competing for one place. Those who have picked "Medicine" as their first-choice specialty total 605 and the applicants for "Pharmacy" as a first-choice are 211. There are also 70 high-school graduates who will take part in the ranking with the results they achieved at the preliminary exams. From the total number of candidates (816) women are twice as many (563 - 69%) as men (253 - 31%). For the first year, the relative share of the applicants who submitted their applications electronically, through the system at the university website, is highest (48%), followed by the students who personally submitted their papers in the Rectorate building,

Pleven - 37%. There is a marked decline in the proportion of service users in the temporary application posts around the country.

The results of the preliminary exam session were also announced. Top marks in biology (full sixes) are 7 and the overall share of excellent grades is 9.34%. The top marks in the chemistry preliminary exam are 22.

On July 12, the second exam from the session (chemistry) was held. It was attended by 713 candidate students who competed for 133 places, which makes an average of just over 6 candidates for one place. Candidate students took their seats from 8.00 am to 8.30 am. At 8.30 am in Asclepius Hall the test version of the exam questions and tasks in chemistry was picked. This was done on an arbitrary basis, in the presence of the members of the Academic Leadership of MU-Pleven - the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov; Deputy Rector of Educational Activities, Prof. M. Alexandrova; Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Dr. A. Asparuhov; Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Assoc. Prof. Pavlina Yordanova; Chairperson of the Chemistry Exam Evaluation Committee, Prof. Angelina Stoyanova; the Chair of the Technical

Commission for Admission, Virginia Lazarova; parents of student candidates and journalists. The exam began at 9.00 am and lasted for 4 astronomical hours.

Even before the second examination, on July 10, 2017, the university displayed the results of the biology exam at a specific location in the Rectorate and the University's website. The highest number of grades fall into the "good" (4) grade - 43%, followed by "very good" (5) at estimated - 22%. The excellent biology grades from the regular exam are 11 (2%), while in the preliminary examination there were much more - 55 candidates were rated over 5.50. Registered poor marks (2) in biology in the regular session were 108 (16%) and those with a grade of 3 were 119 (17%).

The results of the chemistry exam were announced on July 17th. Candidates had the opportunity to check their ratings online and on-site in the Rectorate. The excellent chemistry marks are, for the first time this year, more than those in biology - in the preliminary session excellent marks (over 5.50) in chemistry are 12% versus 9% in biology, and at the regular chemistry session 10% versus 2% in biology.



## 178 ARE THE NEW STUDENTS IN THE SPECIALTIES "MEDICINE" AND "PHARMACY" AT MU-PLEVEN



On July 18, the first students in the specialties "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" at the MU-Pleven were accepted. On 19 July, a list and schedule of the rankings and deadlines for

enrollment of newly-accepted students were posted on the site of the University. They had three days - 19, 20 and 21 July to enroll. Candidates, who were not accepted during the first or second stage of admission, automatically participated in a third stage in descending order, depending on their score. On 24th of

July the second stage of enrollment began for student candidates in the Master's specialties at MU-Pleven - "Medicine" and "Pharmacy". More than half of the places were filled in for both majors - 62 newly admitted students of Medicine and 19 freshmen in Pharmacy. On August 2, Medical University - Pleven completely filled in the 133 places for full-time state-requested training in the Master's courses "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" after the third stage of admission. Two girls were accepted with a maximum of 36.00 in the "Medicine" specialty - Betina Mukova from Slavyanovo and Ilona Yordanova from Vratsa. On the same day, MU-Pleven announced an admission procedure for paid education of medical students, based on a decision of the Academic Council of the University and the Higher Education Act. For the paid

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education in the specialty of "Medicine", applicants were required to have passed the entrance exams at the Plevan University of Medicine but have not been accepted on state grand. The Higher School has announced that it will accept a quota of 16 medical students for a fee - 10 girls and 6 boys. The annual fee for medical training in 2017/2018 academic year is 6 790.50 BGN. Applicants for paid education were required to submit papers from 7th to 11th August in the Department of Education in the Rectorate or online through the University's website. A record number of candidates submitted applications - 73. The results from the first stage of paid education enrollment procedures were issued on August 11, while enrollment of newly accepted students for paid education was from 14 to 16 August. The total number of students enrolled in the first year of Bulgarian Language Education in the specialties "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" of MU-Pleven for the Academic year 2017/2018 as of August 31st is 157. There will be enrollment of 21 students with Bulgarian nationality and foreign citizenship, based on Decree № 103 and No. 228 of the Council of Ministers on the implementation of educational activities for Bulgarians living abroad.



## 448 STUDENT CANDIDATES FOR BACHELOR DEGREE SPECIALTIES AT MU-PLEVEN THE UNIVERSITY EXTENDED THE APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THESE SPECIALTIES

The total number of public admissions for the nine Bachelor's degree programs at the Health Care, Public Health and Medical College Faculties was 210, including the new specialty "Medical Cosmetics". Two dates for accepting the documents of the candidates in these specialties were set up. As of June 30, 2017, the candidates for the Bachelor's degree programs were 362. After the second admission date, 19-22 July 2017, the total number of Bachelor's degree candidates was 448. They could take part in the ranking with their assessment marks from the preliminary or the regular examinations at MU-Pleven; with a biology matriculation exam marks or with another optional matriculation examination mark. With a decision of the Academic Leadership, this year the opportunities for the applicants for admission in the Bachelor's degree programs were expanded by allowing student candidates in the MA programs at MU-Pleven to participate in the ranking with their examination marks in the MA

program Biology exam. 18 students are reported to have benefitted from this opportunity.

After completing the public admission in the Bachelor's degree programs, the higher education institution officially announced the admission of students for paid education in the Bachelor's degree programs for the academic year 2017/2018. For paid training, a total of 36 places were announced in *Nursing* (10 places), *Midwifery* (5 places); *Laboratory Technician* (4 places); *X-ray Technician* (2 places); *Assistant Pharmacist* (5 places); *Medical rehabilitation and Ergotherapy* (5 places); *Protection and control of public health* (2 places) and *Social activities* (3 places). The annual fees for paid education in the Bachelor's degree specialties in the Health Care Faculty amount to BGN 4,165. For the specialties *Medical Rehabilitation and Ergotherapy* and *Protection and Control of Public Health* in the Public Health Faculty, the amount is BGN 2,303 and for *Social activities* - BGN 1,508.

In the 2017/2018 academic year,



a total of 226 students will be trained in the nine Bachelor's degree programs at the Public Health, Health Care and Medical College Faculties. From a total of 226 students admitted most are public (on a state grand) (210) and a fraction have opted for paid education (16).

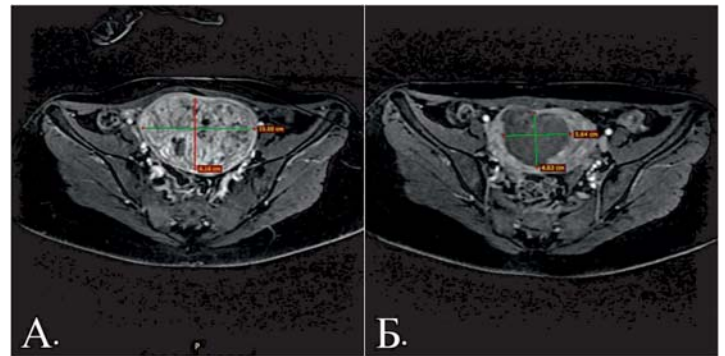


# HIFU CENTER "ST. MARINA - PLEVEN" FACILITATES YET ANOTHER PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

On August 18, 2017 baby Gergana was born after her mother Virginia Georgieva was completely cured of myoma. This was made possible by treatment with the non-invasive ultrasound apparatus HIFU at "St. Marina" University Hospital - Pleven.

In September 2014, Virginia was diagnosed with a myoma node occupying much of the uterus. After nuclear magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of her pelvis with intravenous contrast, the diagnosis was confirmed and the tumor was identified as a myomic node with a size of about 10 cm. She then received a proposal for surgical treatment by a gynecologist, which would have meant the removal of the uterus and the impossibility of having more children. Although the woman has one cesarean birth, she and her husband wanted a second child. She started reading on the internet, seeking treatment options to keep her chances for a second pregnancy. There she found information about a new device for non-invasive (non-incision) ultrasound "killing" of tumor formations (HIFU). She learned that a HIFU device for "surgery without scalpel" had been installed at the St. Marina-Pleven Hospital and had been functioning since December 2012 as the only HIFU center in Southeastern Europe. Looking at international sites, the patient confirmed that the method is widespread and yields very good results for patients in her condition.

Virginia consulted with the doctors working at the Center and decided to undergo treatment. She says that during the procedure she experienced little warming in the abdomen and the cooling effect of the water in which that part of her body was submerged. However, thanks to the mild anesthesia, the patient felt comfortable and maintained constant contact with the HIFU Center team. The procedure was completed in about 1 hour and 20 minutes. The recovery window of the patient is only several hours post-op and until the evening she was with her family. Virginia betrayed her astonishment at the fact that she was cured without serious trauma and incisions. During the very first re-examination, a month after the HIFU treatment it was confirmed that the myoma node had begun to disappear. Its maximum size was 7.5 cm - 2.5 cm smaller than its original size. The complaints of a heavy menstrual cycle were gone, as were the accompanying severe pains. During the seventh month post-op, the



control MRI showed excellent results - the myoma node was destroyed and the "dead" tissue in the uterus was only 5 cm in size. The next check-up with a gynecologist, who did not approve the patient's decision to trust HIFU treatment, demonstrated a reduction of the node to 3.5 cm. However, they continued to persuade Virginia to undergo surgery. Then came the good news of a natural pregnancy that went without problems.

Dimitrov, head of HIFU Center - Pleven explained that in most cases the patients do not inform doctors from the HIFU Center about their pregnancies because after the good results of the treatment of myoma or adenomyosis of the uterus they continue to check in with their personal gynecologists. Therefore, the team's desire is to make a register of successfully cured patients who, subsequently, became pregnant and gave birth to a "HIFU baby". It has been proven that HIFU is the gentlest treatment for the uterus and its epithelium, which is a woman's most important reproductive organ. There are 8 centers in Europe with functioning HIFU treatment, one of them is in Pleven. "In the eyes of colleagues from other countries, we are an equally competent partner," said Dimitrov, who was re-elected at a forum in China for a second term in the Executive Board of the International Association of Minimally Invasive and Non-Invasive Surgery.

According to Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov, the lucky mother Virginia is proof of the good results of the advanced methods of treatment, reducing the trauma to the patient and accelerating their recovery. He stressed that these are only possible with a high degree of patient awareness and trust in new technologies and the expertise of medical professionals. Associate Professor Dimitrov added that from September 2017 HIFU Center "St. Marina" - Pleven will surprise its patients with new, more affordable prices for all types of "treatment without scalpel."

V. Dukova

## ASSOC. PROFESSOR DOBROMIR DIMITROV WAS RE-ELECTED AT A FORUM IN CHINA FOR A SECOND TERM IN THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MINIMALLY INVASIVE AND NON-INVASIVE MEDICINE



From 13 to 18 July 2017 in Chongqing, China, the Third International Conference of the International Association for Minimal Invasive and Non-Invasive Medicine was organized. Medical University – Pleven was represented at the forum by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Head of HIFU Center "St. Marina" - Pleven.

More than 350 physicians from over 20 countries participated in the forum in China. The focus of the scientific papers presented was on the various invasive and non-invasive approaches to treatment such as: robotic surgery, laparoscopic surgery, HIFU (high intensity focused ultrasound) treatment, RF ablation, cryoablation,

etc.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov presented a comparative analysis to the international audience of the clinical outcomes of the use of HIFU treatment of patients with advanced pancreatic cancer between HIFU Center "St. Marina" - Pleven and the Second Partner Hospital of Chongqing Medical University. HIFU therapy is applied parallel to chemotherapy based on a specific pattern. The outlook for patients is generally excellent - the mean survival rate measured after the HIFU procedure is over 9 months. Furthermore, the most significant symptom for these patients – pain – has decreased significantly or completely disappeared. Moreover, the analysis shows the same level of success in the Bulgarian and Chinese HIFU teams, who have a longer, 15-year experience. This proves that the team at HIFU Center "St. Marina" - Pleven has fully mastered the technology and can utilize it in the treatment of Bulgarian and European patients.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrov was re-elected as member of the Executive

Board of the International Association for Minimally Invasive and Non-Invasive Medicine for a new term of 4 years. Professor David Granston from Oxford University, England was elected President of the Association. At the meeting, a decision was made to conduct a scientific study aimed at comparing the clinical, social and financial results in the open-surgery treatment of myoma disease and the laparoscopic and HIFU treatment based solely on European centers. It was proposed that the leading centers in the study be those in Barcelona, Frankfurt, Bonn and Pleven. The results of a similar study - one comparing laparoscopic and open surgery with HIFU treatment for myoma - were presented. The results clearly show that HIFU-treated patients in Asian centers very quickly return to normal social life (median of 3.8 days); health care costs are also lower and less than 1% of all patients develop complications compared to surgically treated patients in Europe. The results of this study were published this year in the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.



## Interview with Prof. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven

- Prof. Tomov, this year there are even more student candidates applying at MU-Pleven. Why, do you think, is the competition so fierce?

- Over the past few years, we have taken steps in maintaining and increasing the interest in our university. Our medical university is located in one of the small towns of central Northern Bulgaria, but as representatives of Pleven and the region we try to attract the attention of the candidate students in a variety of ways. We lead a year-round campaign, we are present on all student exchanges as well as the media, but more importantly, MU-Pleven itself is one of the pioneers in the introduction of new technologies

in the field of training and research. Perhaps this is what attracts young people who are initiative and inquisitive and interested in new things and modern technologies. This is, I believe, one of the important prerequisites for success. There is another factor worth mentioning - students who graduate from a university are the best advertisers with what they say about it, especially foreign students.

- What are the innovative methods that you've introduced for the first time in Bulgaria?

- Robotic surgery, which is an emblem and symbol not only for Pleven and our city but also for Bulgaria. It represents us before

Europe and the world and is one of the things that attract Bulgarian and foreign students. One year ago, at a student reception, a student from the UK came to me and said, "I am here, Professor Tomov, because of the robot you have at the university. The robot is an outstanding, cutting-edge technology that is also being widely introduced into the Bulgarian market. We have already taken steps in a different direction - telemedicine and 3D medicine. We were the first to introduce a 3D virtual dissection table that makes possible the reconstruction of two-dimensional images from an X-ray and a magnetic

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resonance into a three-dimensional format. This allows the patient to be examined in detail in 3D format and we are already using it to train our students in disciplines such as imaging, abdominal surgery, gynecology and anatomy of the human body. In addition, we've released two live 3D animations. In October, we will finalize our project for 3D studio for education and research. There, lectures on anatomy, surgery and gynecology will be exported to a real three-dimensional format, similar to watching a movie in 3D cinema. We also have other initiatives that are still at project level.

- Can you give us an example?

- By the start of next year, we will introduce 3D printing as a way of creating models to train our students in one of the newest disciplines - Minimally Invasive Surgery. Currently, students are trained on simulators, virtual trainers and on living tissue. With the 3D printer, we'll give them the ability to print three-dimensional organs and then use them for further training. The fabric of the organs is a special gel that allows modeling by the printer in 3D.

- How do you facilitate and where do you integrate all these innovative projects, considering state hospitals are increasingly underfunded in Bulgaria?

- In Pleven, in 2007, the Telecommunication Endoscopy Center for Telemedicine opened doors in order to facilitate tele-learning and 3D training. This is our base that we are currently improving upon. It is separate from the state hospital, but with the capabilities of telemedicine, our students observe everything that happens in the operating theaters of university clinics and hospitals around the country. Conducting training in a similar manner in other hospitals is one of our goals. We are about to introduce a very innovative technology that would facilitate that process but I cannot announce it for the time being.

- Are there any private hospitals in Pleven that could serve as base for

training students or is it only the state one?

- MU-Pleven is the only medical university in Bulgaria that currently has no second university base, but one of the three private hospitals in the city - "St. Marina" - has already completed accreditation for a training base and this will enable us to start the procedure for it to become a university training base. Our idea is to gradually integrate all private hospitals in Pleven and to use their staff and technological potential for the training of our students.

- With regard to the number of international students currently enrolled at MU-Pleven. How many students are you officially allowed to train and how different is that number from your aspirations?

- The capacity of the higher school in that regard is limited. Currently it cannot exceed 2500 students. Medicine is one of the specialties in which foreign students are markedly interested and at the moment we are training 900 people from other countries in that field. But we are working on this issue, and this year we are preparing a new report on increasing the capacity. We plan to ask for 600 new student seats and expect to receive an adequate response.

- Do you believe those new 600 students can help satisfy the need for nurses, midwives and medical experts in general? How real is the possibility of MU-Pleven being allowed that increase?

- We certainly hope so, considering our university has the smallest capacity. Although there are four medical universities which train so many students for a country as small as Bulgaria, there is still a deficit. It is even more overwhelming a problem overseas.

- What can we do to keep our medical professionals here, in Bulgaria?

- This is another topic that impacts our society as a whole, not only the medical universities or MES and MH. I know that pay is always considered to come first, but perhaps money is

not the most important issue in this case. Many young people who emigrate abroad say they get not only better pay, but also better work conditions and opportunities to grow as professionals and researchers. There are hospitals in Bulgaria at a very high level but some normative documents create obstructions for young people who complete their higher course in medicine to gain adequate opportunities for specialization. Ordinance 1 should be amended; I believe the Ministry is working in this direction. The specialization system was transferred from the universities to the hospitals, which I believe was a mistake, because before it was considered part of education and after the change the academic element involved in it was reduced.

- State subsidies per students were reduced. How did that affect your work?

- This is a blow to all medical universities. The idea of the Ministry of Education and Science was that, with this high coefficient, the medical universities take up a large part of the state education subsidy. However, I would pose the following question - in Bulgaria there are several universities with a capacity of over 15 000 students, how much is the subsidy for them!? In fact, just several universities take two thirds of the subsidy for higher education in our country and yet the attention was directed towards us. Medical universities in Bulgaria are an example of a successful establishment in the field of higher education and this model should be supported.

- Have the Rectors of all medical universities in Bulgaria discussed this topic? What actions do you intend to pursue?

- We have and we do not intend for these changes to go undisputed. Corrections need to be made to the current subsidies. We still manage to handle the deficit with revenue but it is not enough.

Interview in Bulgarian: Maria  
Chipileva





## MU-PLEVEN WILL HOST “SCIENTISTS NIGHT” FOR THE FIFTH TIME

For the fifth time, on September 29, 2017, Plevan Medical University will host the Night of Scientists, participating in the consortium of higher education institutions and research organizations that take part in the initiative in Bulgaria.

The Night of Scientists is held for the 11th time in Bulgaria. The initiative was put forward by the European Commission and aims to present the work of scientists to the general public and to attract young people to a career in science and research. The events included in the "European Scientists Night 2017" program will take place on 29 September simultaneously in more than 250 cities in Europe and around the world. Eleven Bulgarian cities will take part in the initiative. The program in Bulgarian is united around the "FRESH" project, which aims to improve the public's understanding of science and to, vice-versa, engage scientists with the problems of society.

The topic of "European Scientists Night - Plevan 2017" is "Sports - the best medicine against daily stress". European Scientists Night - Plevan 2017 will be realized by lecturers and students of the Medical University - Plevan, with the active participation of the Union of Scientists - Plevan Branch, the National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski", *Be Active* Association, European Center for Education, Science and Innovations (ECESI), "Geo Milev" High School of Mathematics, Language School - Plevan, "Aleko Konstantinov" Vocational High School of Tourism, State Finance and Economics High School - *Intellect* and "Ivan Vazov" Secondary School.



### THE MEDICAL COLLEGE AT MU-PLEVEN ORGANIZES THE 15<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SESSION FOR STUDENTS AND LECTURERS

On October 5 and 6, 2017 Medical College at the Medical University - Plevan will organize the already traditional National Scientific Session for Students and Lecturers. The Organizing Committee with Honorary Chair: Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Plevan and Chairperson: Assoc. Prof. Evgeniya Barzashka, MD, Director of Medical College- Plevan invites all those interested to take part with a report or a poster. Two reports per participant (including co-authorship) are allowed.

SCIENTIFIC TOPICS: "Medical-Diagnostic Studies"; "Pharmaceutical care"; "Social activities"; "Miscellaneous".

Additional info: <http://www.mu-pleven.bg>



### UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL – PLEVEN – ONE OF THE ONLY THREE STATE HOSPITALS NOT IN THE RED IN BULGARIA

University Hospital "Dr. Georgi Stranski", Plevan is among the three state hospitals in the country, which are still profitable. This has become clear from an article in the newspaper *Sega*, in which data from the Health Ministry's analyses is quoted by MP Nigyar Jafer. The analysis shows that only 3 of the 62 state hospitals are profitable - the Montana district hospital, "St. Ivan Rilski" University Hospital in Sofia and the University Hospital in Plevan. On the other side there are a number of district hospitals, including Blagoevgrad, Sliven, Haskovo, Gabrovo and others, as well as "St. Anna" in the capital that are very much in the red. At a meeting of the Parliamentary Health Commission on July 6, Health Minister Nikolay Petrov announced that his department has found a number of irregularities and imbalances in the management of the hospitals that he will request be fixed as soon as possible. According to Minister Petrov, the directors of a number of state hospitals have failed to properly manage the finances of their health establishments, suffering losses between BGN 50 000 and 700 000 by buying medicines above the admissible prices. For this they will be

punished. Prior to the meeting Minister Nikolay Petrov had a meeting with directors of district hospitals and asked them to review carefully all the contracts that were concluded. He insisted it is important to look for the most effective ways to spend money. As an example, the Minister indicated contracts with third-party contractors to transport patients on dialysis. This practice makes the service much more expensive than if the hospital completed the procedure itself. He urged directors to clear all unreasonable spending in their health care institutions in order for him to be able to ask the prime minister and the finance minister for an increase in the budget. The Health Minister advised hospital directors to take the example of their colleagues in the private health care establishments and seek the lowest price when buying equipment, medicines and supplies.

The Ministry believes that by using the example of private hospitals and profitable state hospitals, uniform rules for wage and salary formation as well as buying medicines, equipment and consumables can be established.



## TEAM OF EXPERTS AT THE NEUROSURGERY CLINIC AT UNIVERSITY-HOSPITAL PLEVEN PERFORMED A DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX OPERATION

After an extremely complicated, 6-hour operation, a woman who was completely paralyzed from the waist down is on her feet again. A team led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yordan Panov, Head of the Neurosurgery Clinic at "Dr. Georgi Stranski" University Hospital - Pleven performed the intervention in which a spinal cord tumor that was causing paralysis was removed. The woman had once been operated in another clinic but since January, as a result of tumor hardening and prolonged spinal cord compression, she was completely immobilized. The doctors she consulted

did not believe she could walk again. After consulting with Assoc. Prof. Panov, she decided to undergo the extremely difficult and risky tumor-removal surgery. The operation lasted 6 hours, 5 of which the doctors - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Panov, Dr. Vassilev and Dr. Mladenovski had to spend working under a microscope. The end result is more than successful - on the very first day post-op the patient was able to move and on the sixth day, when she was discharged, she could stand on her own.



## CONTEMPORARY METHOD FOR BREAST CANCER TREATMENT INTRODUCED AT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL – PLEVEN

A new method of treating breast cancer was introduced at the Oncology Center at Dr. Georgi Stranski University Hospital. As part of the treatment, surgical intervention and radiotherapy are administered simultaneously. For this purpose, special radiotherapy equipment for electronic, high-dose brachytherapy has been installed in the Oncological Surgery Clinic. During surgery, the site of the tumor is directly irradiated while keeping minimal irradiation of surrounding tissues. Therefore, postoperative radiation therapy can be entirely skipped in patients with early-diagnosed breast cancer. Thus, all required hospital treatment may be completed during surgery or, at the very least, significantly shorten the treatment course of external irradiation, which usually lasts for 5 to 7 weeks. This relieves the patient of the need to repeatedly visit the hospital and provides opportunity for their return to normal daily life within days of surgery.

The application of intraoperative radiation therapy requires certain conditions - the presence of a surgical team capable of applying contemporary approaches to the surgical treatment of breast cancer, a team of experts - radiotherapists and a trained medical physicist, possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to operate modern radiotherapy equipment in an unusual situation - in the operating room, during surgery.

The Clinic for Oncological Surgery at the Oncology Center at University Hospital – Pleven is well-known for applying contemporary treatment methods of oncological diseases, breast cancer in particular. Several teams of doctors participated in the clinical start of intraoperative radiotherapy: a surgical team led by Prof. T. Deliiyski, Head of the Clinic of

Oncological Surgery, Dr. Valcheva, Dr. Petrova, Ph.D. Dinova; radio-therapeutic team headed by Dr. A. Mikinski, Head of Radiotherapy Department, Dr. Hitova; Anesthesiology team, headed by Dr. I. Mihaylov, Head of Onco-resuscitation, Assist. Pakova and Medical physicist I. Petrov.

The surgical team selected the patient and performed the operation in accordance with the requirements of the new method. The anesthesiology team provided anesthesia, enabling radiotherapy in the operating room. The task of the radiotherapy team was the hardest - adopting the new approach, licensing the modern equipment and introducing it into the clinical practice in the operating room while at the same time observing the necessary requirements for precision and safety. The Radiotherapy Department confidently overcame the new challenge, which further expanded the number of treatment methods for breast cancer applied at the University Hospital "Dr. Georgi Stranski" - Pleven. During the last year, the most modern, high-tech radiation methods - a linear accelerator that provides rapid and accurate conventional radiation therapy, intensity-determined radiotherapy, volume-modulated rotation therapy and irradiation while inhaling, are being implemented and applied in clinical practice at University Hospital in Pleven. The Radiotherapy Department is equipped with the most modern equipment with the resources provided by the Ministry of Health in 2015 under Operational Program "Regional Development". Another helpful factor for the application of the new methods is the leading role of Medical University - Pleven in the application of high technologies such as robotic surgery.



## EXPERT GROUP FROM NEAA VISITS MU-PLEVEN

In the period 05-06.07.2017, an expert group from NEAA visited MU-Pleven for the accreditation of two doctoral programs: *Analytical Chemistry* and *Biochemistry*. The group from NEAA had the following members: Head - Assoc. Prof. Vesselin Kmetov, Faculty of Chemistry, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"; members - Prof. Dr. Mariela Odzhakova-Baytosheva, Faculty of Biology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and Desislava Gerginova - student, University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy - Sofia. Observer was Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Zhecheva, member of the PCNSMI at NEAA, and Coordinator - Sava Mihovska, Mas, expert at the NEAA PCNSMI.

The Expert Group held a series of meetings with representatives of the University Leadership, the committees that prepared the self-assessment reports on the two doctoral programs, representatives of the Leadership of

the main units and departments providing training for the Academic and Scientific Degree "Doctor", the research staff and the participants in scientific projects. Discussions were held over the educational process of the doctoral programs and the University's system of interconnecting the latter with research. The representatives of NEAA also took note of the policy developed by the University's management to provide a qualitative academic staff for the education of PhD students as part of the institution's development strategy. There were also meetings with doctoral students trained in the two doctoral programs, employers, equipment and facilities experts, financial and information management of the programs. The NEAA work group was familiarized with the capacity of study halls, offices, laboratories, libraries, etc. as well as with the technical tools and information networks necessary for the academic comfort of the doctoral students.



## THE TEAM AT OG CLINIC, UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL PLEVEN HELD A PROTEST AGAINST THE VIOLENCE TOWARDS MEDICS

On July 4, the entire medical staff of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinic as well as the Department of Neonatology at University Hospital "Dr. Georgi Stranski" in Pleven joined a symbolic protest against the violence towards medics. The occasion was yet another case of assault of medical staff - a doctor from *Sheinovo* Hospital. The medics' gowns were decorated with strips of white cloth with which the health workers expressed their sympathy towards their injured colleague.

"We fully support our colleagues and the injured colleague from *Sheinovo* Hospital; therefore we decided to make this symbolic act today. The strips are not only an expression of support, but they also express our protest against the violence that is even more common among the nurses," said the Head of the Obstetric Clinic at the University Hospital and Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at MU-Pleven, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jordan Popov.

Despite the protest, the medics were at their workplaces and performed their usual duties.



## HOSPITALS IN BULGARIA ARE IN DIRE NEED OF BETTER FUNDING

In an interview aired on *Bulgaria ON AIR*, Kalin Popovski, MD stated that Bulgarian hospitals are in dire need of better funding. He further elaborated that NHIF should promptly deal with the over-the-limit expenses of the hospitals. He added that the medical union is right to ask for refunds on those sums and waiting for the Regulatory body of NHIF to

deal with the problem might take a prolonged period of time. In his opinion, it is also reasonable for limits on funding to be voided for state and university hospitals.



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