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THE NEW FACULTY OF PHARMACY AT MU-PLEVEN HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

With an overwhelming majority (89 to 1 votes), Bulgaria's National Assembly approved the establishment of the new Faculty of Pharmacy at MU-Pleven on 30th March 2016. The establishment of the faculty, which was high on the list of strategic goals set by the current Governing Body of the university and was the highlight of Prof. Slavcho Tomov's agenda when accepting the position Rector of MU-Pleven, is now a reality.

The difficult path that MU-Pleven had to thread in order to make this long-held desire a reality was the topic of discussion during an open press-conference with representatives of the media, held in BTA's (Bulgarian News Agency) press-club. MU-Pleven's Governing Body was represented by Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven; Prof. Dr. Grigor Gorchev, MD, PhD, DSc, Member of correspondence at BAS, Honorary Rector of MU-Pleven; Prof. Dr. Margarita Alexandrova, PhD, DSc, Vice-Rector of Education; Assoc. Prof. Zdravka Radionova, Vice-Rector of Science and Research; Prof. Savelina Popovska, Vice-Rector of European Integration and International Cooperation as well as Prof. Mariya Sredkova, Head of the Research Center at MU-Pleven.

"March 30th is and will forever be one of the most important days in MU-Pleven's history." – Said Prof. Tomov – "A considerable funding and effort was required for the single purpose of establishing the new faculty and turning our dream of 'Pharmacy' field of study into reality."

Prof. Tomov also added that the new faculty building took two long years to build and furnish but is almost ready to accept the students of Pharmacy. Only the finishing touches remain, as well as acquiring the equipment required for the specialized laboratories. The building will be ready in autumn for the first ever students of Pharmacy at MU-Pleven. The academic staff for the first two years of education is ready and prepared and the field of study itself received its accreditation in 2015 with a set limit of 300 students total and a



clearly-defined 5-year course of education. In 2016/17 academic year, 30 students are expected to be accepted on a state grant.

Prof. Tomov further added: "All major political powers in Bulgaria green-lit this project and through their unconditional support we believe we were able to prove how badly-needed are the specialists in this field of study. The hunger for pharmaceutical specialists in Mid and North-Western Bulgaria is very real and very unsettling with only 1 out of 3 specialists that graduate in the sphere of Pharmacy ever returning to work in their places of birth." He also explained that the Pharmacy field of study will not only prepare Major-degree professionals to work at pharmacies but also in the pharmaceutical industry and development. For the practical training of these students, contracts have already been made with several pharmaceutical factories. The new faculty of pharmacy will also aim to prepare professionals in *clinical pharmacy* and *clinical trials* of pharmaceutical products – both of which are in dire need of qualified specialists. Therefore, the curriculum of the new faculty includes not only the 29 mandatory disciplines of study but also 4 electives. By incorporating every possible nuance of Pharmacy into the education process of the students, the latter could later specialize and work in every conceivable sphere of expertise within the field of Pharmacy.

Prof. Grigor Gorchev, Honorary Rector of MU-Pleven had this to add: "Establishing the faculty of Pharmacy as part of the controlled fields of study was, indeed, a challenge. Especially considering the competition of other faculties of Pharmacy around the country, that have already established and proved themselves during the years. Pharmacy field of study is a prestigious and much sought-after sphere of education and will therefore bring much acclaim and authority to our university. This is a major success for MU-Pleven and the city of Pleven as a whole and should be regarded as such."

During the press conference, information was divulged about MU-Pleven's intent to establish a new Research Institute to replace the Research Center now functioning at the university. Prof. Tomov explained that research plays an increasingly key role in the funding of universities with 1/3 of the state grant being determined by the impact of the research work done. With the restructuring and establishing of the new Research Institute, MU-Pleven aims to address the new tendencies in higher education concerning the development and financing of universities. The Head of the Research Center, Prof. Sredkova and her team have already prepared the project for the new structure. The project will be discussed during the

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next meeting of the General Assembly of MU-Pleven and will be further redirected to National Assembly of Bulgaria for review and ratification.

By the end of the year, MU-Pleven aims to establish an International Students Center, situated on "Hristo Botev" 74. The property there was granted to MU-Pleven as state-owned property per decree of the National Assembly of

Bulgaria.

Yet another new project is underway, aiming to increase the capacity of some of the fields of study in MU-Pleven that prepare much-needed specialist – the Medicine, Midwifery and Nursing fields of study. The university is aiming to expand its capacity to a total of 3000 students.



THIS YEAR'S DAY OF THE STUDENT CANDIDATES AT MU-PLEVEN WAS MET WITH HUGE INTEREST

During its freshmen admission campaign, MU-Pleven held the traditional open-door day of the student candidates on 17 March 2016. Hundreds of school seniors (4th year students) from the city and the region as well as their teachers and parents attended the event at "Galen" hall, TELECOM. The large hall at the Telecommunication center proved not to be large enough to accommodate all student candidates, interested in the fields of study at MU-Pleven. The number of attendees at the event was, indeed, record-high.

A specially-designed movie was used to familiarize the prospect students with the history and development of MU-Pleven as well as with the educational opportunities and fields of study at the university. V. Lazarova, Head of the Student Office familiarized the student candidates with the application and



examination procedures, the schedule of the admission examinations sessions – both preliminary and actual. Attendees at the event had the opportunity to learn more about the structure of MU-Pleven, its Governing Body and its function as well as to address any questions and concerns directly to the Heads of the Evaluation and Examination Committees for both biology and chemistry.

A practical demonstration of first aid performed by MU-Pleven's students during the event was met with very positive feedback from the attending school seniors. As was the surprise Biology quiz, prepared especially for the day of the student candidates. Interesting prizes awaited the most well-versed in biology amongst the school seniors. An exhibition of posters, the work of MU students, could also be seen in the lobby of the Telecommunication center.



FRESHMEN ADMISSION CAMPAIGN 2016 AT MU-PLEVEN

MU-Pleven's 2016/17 admission campaign launches with unchanged admission capacity for state-grant students. Tuition rates and fees also remain unchanged. The university will accept a total of 394 Bulgarian applicants - 294 full-time and 100 extramural (part-time) students. 74 students will attend 'Professional' Bachelor degree courses (e.g. *Medical Laboratory Assistant*, etc.) and 130 will attend Bachelor courses (e.g. *Midwifery* and *Nursing*). The total admission capacity for Major's degree *Medicine* is 90 state-grant students.

Applicants for the Bachelor degrees can choose to either sit a state examination in biology or a Biology test or both with only the higher mark earned being applicable.

Applicants for the Major's degree field of Medicine must apply through sitting specialized Chemistry and Biology admission examinations. Both the preliminary and actual examination marks can apply, with the higher marks earned taking precedence.

The Governing body of MU-Pleven is further developing and enforcing the gradual shift from open-ended questions to more close-ended (test) form of examination, which aims to promote a more diverse way of approaching the syllabus while at the same time cracking on the practice of mechanical (*recitative*) copying of the study material in the fields of biology and chemistry.

RECORD-HIGH ATTENDANCE ON THE PRELIMINARY ADMISSION EXAMINATIONS AT MU-PLEVEN

MU-Pleven's 2016-17 admission campaign for Bulgarian students consists of two admission examination sessions – a *preliminary* one in April and a regular one in July. Both the preliminary and regular examination marks can apply, with the higher marks earned taking precedence. MU-Pleven was the first medical university in the country to introduce preliminary examination sessions in order to familiarize the prospect students of Medicine with the examination process and allow them to adapt to the requirements and difficulty of the examination material.

There are traditionally three ways to apply for the examinations – electronically (through MU-Pleven's website), locally (by personally visiting

the Rectorate building of MU-Pleven and its application office) and long-distance (through applying in one of MU-Pleven's application office branches, located in all major Bulgarian cities). A total of 691 applicants filed in their application forms this year. Of them, 129 sat the Biology test for the Bachelor degrees, 527 sat the special application examination in biology for the *Medicine* field of study and 461 sat the application examination in chemistry.

Comparing the results of this year's Biology exam with that of previous years, a marked improvement in the prospective students' preparation and therefore overall success rate must be noted. 2.4 times less students have received *poor* marks on the exam and

the *excellent* marks are 60 (12 full-scores) which is an impressive six-time increase compared to the results in 2013. The results of this year's Chemistry examination confirm the positive tendency with a share of only 11.3% of all attending students receiving *poor* marks. The number of *excellent* marks is 83, which is an amazing, 14-time increase compared with the results in 2013.

Application forms for the regular examination session can be filed between the June 20th and 30th 2016. Those interested in applying for the examinations locally can do that in room 207, Rectorate building, Student Office. The regular examinations will take place on July 5th – Biology and July 12th – Chemistry.



MU-PLEVEN'S STUDENTS ARE SECURE IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVEN BEFORE GRADUATION

*An interview with Prof. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven for the morning show
"Good morning, Bulgaria", Radio Focus, 17.03.2016*



Radio Host:

Today is the traditional open-door day of the student candidates at MU-Pleven. High school seniors will be familiarized with the application and examination procedures, the schedule of the admission examinations sessions – both preliminary and actual. Student candidates at the event will have the opportunity to learn more about the structure of MU-Pleven, its Governing Body and its functions. Also it is now clear that the Bulgaria's National Assembly will likely approve the establishment of the new Faculty of Pharmacy at MU-Pleven. In light of recent events, how is the student admission campaign progressing, Prof. Tomov?

Prof. Slavcho Tomov:

It must be noted that during the past few years we've made a number of

changes to the campaign, which is now ongoing throughout almost the entire year. You are quite right that today is an important day at the university. On the traditional open-door day for the student candidates, high school seniors as well as their teachers and parents can really learn and familiarize themselves with the fields of study and carrier opportunities our university has to offer. The last few years we have taken up yet another interesting initiative – "A school visit from the university". It allows for mobile groups of experts, administration and alumni of MU-Pleven to visit schools throughout Northern Bulgaria as 'ambassadors' of higher medical education. We believe no one is more fitting an ambassador than our own alumni that are also the alumni of the high-schools they visit – they are the people with the closest connection to both institutions and types of education. The effects of this initiative have been very positive and indeed very notable last year as, we believe,

they will be (or even more so) this year as well. Despite the situation of ever-worsening demographic crisis, 2015 was very good for us in terms of the sheer number of applicants and we expect year 2016 to be even better. After all, last year's interest toward our most popular field of study – Medicine – was so tremendous, we had to open up additional spots for paid education (non-grant) groups.

Radio Host:

We have discussed this before, Prof. Tomov, but with the increasing number of high school seniors aiming for medical universities and medical fields around the country, is there enough demand on the job market to accommodate the growing supply?

Prof. Slavcho Tomov:

At MU-Pleven we have no concerns in that respect. Our alumni are well-received and sought after even before they actually graduate. Many of them receive their first job offers while still in their last years of study. Our students

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are secure in their professional development with students from *Midwifery, Nursing, Medicine, Rehabilitation* and *Assistant Pharmacist* having virtually 100% professional realization the moment they step out of our door and into the job market. But there exist a more pressing matter we should address - the fact that many of these highly-qualified and much needed on the local market professionals have their sights set on working abroad.

Radio Host:

MU-Pleven has made a huge step forward with the new Faculty of Pharmacy. The only thing left for you to do now is to wait for the National Assembly to give their approval. When is this expected to become a reality and

when will the most eager students be able to apply?

Prof. Slavcho Tomov:

Last year, when launching the admission campaign, the interest towards the Pharmacy field of study was already tremendous. This year, when we are so close to realizing the formal establishment of the new faculty, it is even greater. A curious example of this would be the post on our Facebook page about the new faculty awaiting its final approval before the National Assembly - the moment we posted, it exploded in views and shares - it goes to show how popular the new faculty is likely to be. We still have ways to go but we believe that this autumn we will accept our

first students in the new Faculty of Pharmacy. We have declared that for the first year we will accept only 30 students, which is under our basic capacity of 60 students but it is only natural and normal to start on a lower capacity. The academic staff has already been assembled and the new building - a small architectural jewel with a really modern design - is nearing completion.

Radio Host:

Excellent news for your students, no doubt. The only thing that is left is to wish you and all student candidates luck and success.

Prof. Slavcho Tomov:

Thank you.

Radina Hristova

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, MEGLENA KUNEVA HELD A MEETING WITH STUDENTS AND LECTURERS AT MU-PLEVEN

On 8 April 2016 in "Ambroise Paré" hall at MU-Pleven's Telecommunication Center, the Minister of Education, Meglena Kuneva held a conversational meeting with students and academic staff representatives. The subject of the discussion was: "Improving Bulgarian higher education competitiveness at home and abroad."

Before the discussion, Prof. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven awarded Minister Kuneva and the MP, Mr. Naiden Zelenogorski with commemorative insignias of MU-Pleven for their outstanding contribution and support for the approval and establishment of the new Faculty of Pharmacy.

During the meeting, possible changes to the student loan system were announced with considerable simplifications to the forms and additional opportunities to get approval for loans for studies and placements abroad. These suggestions will form the base of the project for changes to the way students and PhD students receive loans and the opportunities for these loans to be forgiven. The talks about the changes began last week at the Ministry of Education and Science with the participation of the Ministry of Finance, the National Revenue Agency, Trade

banks and the National assembly of student councils. During the talks, members of the Assembly of student councils insisted that interest rates on student loans be lowered to at least the levels typical for our neighboring countries.

The changes in the Law for higher education were also discussed during the meeting. The implementation of the so-called "priority" fields of study was a heated topic of discussion, especially considering *Medicine* is not part of the chosen few. "It is indeed fortunate that you are not part of the priority fields of study. That goes to show that you need no financial aid and have 100% chance



to be employed and have great career development prospects" was Minister Kuneva's take on the topic. She further pointed out that the new changes to the law and the "Education and Science for Intelligent Growth" program give plenty of opportunity for financing student placements and grants for outstanding performances in science.

Minister Kuneva also confirmed the decision of the special committee, tasked with the case of the establishment of the new Faculty of Pharmacy at MU-Pleven. The decision stipulates that the first year for accepting Pharmacy students at MU-Pleven will be 2016-17 and the number of students with state grant will be 30.



THE RECTOR OF MU-PLEVEN RECEIVES A SLS INTERNATIONAL DELEGATE CERTIFICATE



THE SOCIETY OF LAPAROENDOSCOPIC SURGEONS

SLS INTERNATIONAL DELEGATE

Slavcho Tomov, Prof Dr Med

in recognition of your participation as an
International Delegate of the Society of Laparoendoscopic Surgeons

Presented on February 19, 2016

Paul Alan Werber, MD
Chairman, Board of Trustees



Maurice K. Chung, R.Ph., M.D
President

At the end of February, 2016, during the 7th annual meet on minimally invasive surgery in Hawaii, US, the Rector of MU-Pleven was appointed delegate for the Society of Laparoendoscopic Surgeons (SLS). An official ceremony marked the acknowledgement of Prof. Slavcho Tomov with the prestigious certificate of international delegate, handed to him from the President of SLS, Maurice K. Chung, R. Ph., M.D himself.

As international delegate, Prof. Tomov will have the obligation to popularize SLS and increase its influence in Europe and Bulgaria. A task made easier by Prof.

Tomov's standing as member of the Council of SERGS (Society of European Robotic Gynecological Surgery), Co-founder of SEERSS (South-East Europe Robot Surgery Society) and Co-founder of BAMIGS (Bulgarian Association for Minimally Invasive Gynecological Surgery).

During the forum, Prof. Slavcho Tomov was asked to present two lectures - one on the topic of Bulgarian culture and history and another one - a report - compiling and reviewing the findings and experience of his team in the field of robotic gynecological surgery. The scientific presentation was themed: "Complications in Robotic Gynecological Surgery." Prof. Tomov also took the opportunity to invite his colleagues from SLS to visit Bulgaria and participate in the annual conference of SERGS, which will be held under the patronage and with the support of MU-Pleven.

Info by V. Dukova

131 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS GRADUATED FROM THE FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH DURING WORLD HEALTH DAY, APRIL 7TH



The celebration for the promotion of the students from the Faculty of Public Health was held on April 7th, World Health Day. The solemn ceremony took place at "Magnum" hall. 131 students from four fields of study received their Major and Bachelor degree certificates and were congratulated by the honorable guests at the ceremony.

The celebration began with a congratulating note by the Dean of the Faculty of Public Health, Prof. Dr.

Silvia Yankulovska, who introduced the special guests of the occasion – Prof. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven, the Vice-Dean of the Faculty, Assoc. Prof. Tsetsa Doychinova as well as the Vice-Rector of Education, Prof. Dr. Margarita Alexandrova, the Vice-Rector of Research, Prof. Dr. Sevelina Popovska as well as many more representatives of MU-Pleven's Governing Body. The Vice-Mayor of Pleven, Milen Yakov represented the

local authorities during the forum. For a second consecutive year, Prof. Renzo Pegoraro honored the promotion while visiting the university as a speaker during the annual Day of Bioethics at the Faculty of Public Health.

In his address to the graduates, Prof. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven had this to say: "Always retain your willingness and urge to help those

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in need. Do not lose your will to battle and overcome difficulty and hardship. Remember that to save a life, to give life, to care for the living – those are not the simple constituents of a job but rather a life-long mission and responsibility.”

The Dean of the Faculty of Public Health, Prof. Dr. Silvia Yankulovska also addressed the graduates: “Today's ceremony coincides with the World Health Day – the day when the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) was ratified.” She further emphasized the importance of WHO in all spheres of Public Health worldwide as well as its ceaseless efforts to cooperate between institutions and tackle major problems in health and medicine.

Every year the theme of the promotion is different, depending on the most serious dangers to health according to the WHO. This year the accent is on diabetes. According to WHO's prognosis, diabetes will be 7th on the list of the major causes of preventable death by year 2030. Prof.

Yankulovska further elaborated that: “With the increasing demand for highly-qualified specialists in the field of Public Health, the Faculty of Public Health's mission to prepare this much needed personnel is key and also all the more important for the future well-being of all people.”

The ceremony continued with the solemn taking of the vows that would help serve as a moral and ethical backbone for the young professionals. This year's “promoter” of the vow was Assoc. Prof. Nina Mihailova and under her strong guidance, all graduates took their solemn vows and their first step as Public Health professionals.

The graduates received congratulatory addresses from Milen Yakov, Vice-Mayer of Pleven; Assoc. Prof. Klara Dokova, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Healthcare, MU-Varna; Atanas Garev, MD, Director of the Regional Health Inspection; Martin Mitev, Director of the Regional Health Insurance Fund and many others.

The guest speaker from Italy, Prof. Renzo Pegoraro addressed the

students with the following words: “This ceremony is an important step in your lives. You are no longer students, you are graduates and possess the skill set, qualifications and determination to build thriving careers in the field of Public Health. Key to your future professional development is not to *work* as health care professionals but to *be* health care professionals. It is, indeed, an important distinction.”

Representing the graduates, the valedictorians Veselka Lozanova and Alexander Minchev addressed the academic body of MU-Pleven, all the guests and their new colleagues. They expressed the gratitude of the students for the years guidance and congratulated all graduates for their educational success.

The promotion was concluded by awarding the diplomas for the completed courses in higher medical education. All excellent students further received a commemorative insignias from the university for their outstanding academic performance.

Original text: Slavi Yankulovski

THE ANNUAL DAY OF BIOETHICS FOCUSES ON “ETHICS AND AGEING”

The annual Day of Bioethics was held in MU-Pleven under the patronage of the Dean of the Faculty of Public Health, Prof. Dr. Silvia Yankulovska. The forum began with an address by Prof. Dr. Savelina Popovska, Vice-Rector of MU-Pleven. She welcomed the guests of the event, among who was Prof. Renzo Pegoraro, University of Padua, Italy, General Secretary of *Fondazione Lanza*, Padua – Research Center in the fields of Ethics, Bioethics and Environmental Ethics.

The program of the event was focused around the theme of ageing, more specifically “Ethics of Ageing.” This topic is especially relevant for Europe with the ever-increasing mean age of the population.

Prof. Pegoraro's lecture began with a basic introduction into the field of Ethics with respect to ageing and further introduced the projects on the topic he is currently involved with. The accent of his speech was on the difficulties facing modern-day women



with regard to them ultimately having to juggle elderly care, child care and a progressive career. His second lecture was interactive and was presented as a discussion on an actual case from his practice at *Fondazione Lanza*.

Prof. Yankulovska represented the school of ethics at MU-Pleven with a lecture, themed: “Ageing through the lens of human rights.” It included examples from around the world of established human rights for the elderly and examples of their abuse or disregard in a medical and social context.

Philosophical debate on the problems of ageing was the focus of Assoc. Prof. Valentina Kuneva's (Sofia University, Faculty of Philosophy) lecture. Later in the afternoon, medical students and Assistant Professors introduced additional topics of discussion, with Assist. Prof. Atanas Anov and Dr. Diana Pendicheva's reports focusing on dementia,

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problems establishing general competence, age-related in-vitro deliberations, age discrimination in the field of health care, etc.

The forum continued with open discussions on ageing and the ethics of ageing.

Original text: Slavi Yankulovski



PROF. RENZO PEGORARO IN PLEVEN – MEDICINE SHOULD NOT BE A FIELD ON THE FREE MARKET

Prof Renzo Pegoraro was one of the lecturers for Bioethics Day held on 6 April by the Faculty of Public Health of the Medical University of Pleven. He was also guest of honor to the graduation of 131 BA and MA students of the university on 7 April.

Prof. Renzo Pegoraro, Professor of Bioethics at the University of Padua, Italy and General Secretary of Fondazione Lanza, Padua – Research Center in the fields of Ethics, Bioethics and Environmental Ethics, noted that although the field of medicine has its problems, its usefulness is not up for debate.

- Is medicine tackling health problems on a global scale (or is it lagging behind)?

Generally, while medicine manages or tries to manage health problems we are headed the right way. There are, of course, issues. Introducing non-cost-efficient technology, for example. There are issues with the environment, pollution, and we aim to solve them in a way that improves and is generally beneficial to public health. Another issue is maintaining our specific goals for public health. We have to observe ethic and moral medical principles. Medicine largely depends on social-economic factors but it should not be a field on the open market.

- Is Bioethics applicable nowadays?

Bioethics was founded in 1971 as an interdisciplinary approach to solve problems while considering all possible factors. Its main purpose is to find a solution to social-economic, technological, health and ethical issues, which concern both the public and the medical community. Bioethics' goal is to connect science, medicine and ethics. Initially, as a new field, bioethics was scrutinizing and provocative but now there is a risk that it may lose its sharp edge by adapting to the system, new technology, neo-liberalism and the economy.

- Does Bioethics clash with technology or are they beneficial to each other?

There is tension but more as a thing that happened in the beginning when Bioethics raised the question of how technology can help society. A dialogue with medical workers is necessary to

consider the beneficial side but also to warn of the risks and consequences using modern technological advancement in medical treatment. Following this, Bioethics exists to monitor and ensure human rights are not violated.

- What place does Bioethics have in Pleven?

Pleven has left me very optimistic. A third edition of Bioethics Day was held at the Medical University - Pleven and the topics were centered around aging, which is an important issue. The organization was great - with plenary lectures delivered at the beginning of the conference followed by student projects, also concerned with aging, in the second part. The bar was raised high. They contribute greatly to the development of Bioethics but I think more people should become involved in such discussions.

- You are counselor to Pope Francis in the field of Bioethics. Would you share what you advise him on the matter?

I don't advise him, we collaborate. The Pope has a keen interest in the health issues of the elderly as well as solving their social, medical and personal problems. We have been working to solve these problems for the past two years in the Pontifical Academy for Life. One of our concerns is disabled people, as a result of Parkinson's disease for example. The second year we worked toward hiring caretakers for the elderly. Our aim was to provide care and medical help equivalent to each person's needs so



they can retain their good health and dignity while also avoiding any tragic outcome which might come as a consequence to the disease.

- From the standpoint of Bioethics, and considering some demographic issues, how would you comment on the fact that birthrates in some countries are dropping whereas in vitro fertilization gains popularity in others?

I don't think in vitro fertilization is the solution to dropping birthrates. In many cases, it's not about medicine directed at the needs of people but rather their desires. Many women decide to become mothers at a later age, after they have made a career. This is a social problem that needs to be discussed in society as a whole, so women can make the decision to give birth before they're forty. Society can do nothing about infertility. It's a demand and supply problem. The influence of technology in solving the issue should be limited and doctors should take responsibility - they should follow ethical and medical principles, not just respond to market demand.

Interview by Iveta Dimitrova, "Info Pleven"

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL HIFU CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF PLEVEN

On 22 April 2016, Medical University - Pleven, in collaboration with "St. Marina" Multi-profile Hospital - Pleven, organized and hosted the first ever international HIFU conference "HIFU Therapy - Clinical Practice and Future Prospects." Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov, MD, PhD, DSc, Rector of MU-Pleven was Chair of the organization committee with members of the committee including the Chinese partners of the university - Prof. Zechuan Mei, MD and Dr. Jou Kun, MD, and the HIFU team at "St. Marina" hospital - Pleven, Prof. Dr. Grigor Gorchev, MD, PhD, DSc; Prof. Dr. Tashko Stefanov Deliyski, MD,

PhD; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov MD, PhD; Dr. Hyuliya Feradova, MD; Dr. Nadya Stanislavova, MD and Dr. Ventsislav Georgiev, MD.

The conference aimed to share the experience gained over three years of applying the popular innovative non-surgical treatment - thermal ablation of benign and malignant solid tumors. The method is the patients' preferred treatment in a number of big hospitals because of its clear advantages over other treatments - it's non-invasive, it doesn't require general anesthesia, lower rate of complications (compared to other minimal-invasive or invasive methods), doesn't require hospital stay, rapid patient recovery.

The team at the only HIFU center in Eastern Europe at "St. Marina" Multi-profile Hospital - Pleven and their colleagues from MU-Pleven shared their experience of treating more than 350 cases of benign or malignant solid tumors with the HIFU method. A report was made on the bilateral scientific project, an agreement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Bulgaria, "Researching the possibilities of the HIFU (High Intensity Focused Ultrasound) technology for the treatment of myoma in Bulgarian and Chinese patients as a non-invasive method, an alternative to conventional surgery." Physicians who have gained experience with different clinical applications of the HIFU method had a chance to share their findings with a wider audience of physicians, students, graduates and PhD students. The virtual dissection table was used to present the cases of the guest-lecturers.

V. Dukova

THE FIRST LIVE DEMONSTRATION OF A VIRTUAL DISSECTION TABLE WAS MADE AT MU-PLEVEN'S TELECOMMUNICATION CENTER



The first live demonstration of a virtual dissection table was made in the "Ambroise Paré" hall of the Telecommunication Center at MU-Pleven. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov MD, PhD, Head of the HIFU Center at "St. Marina" - Pleven carried out a presentation showcasing the possibilities of MU - Pleven's new apparatus.

The virtual dissection table is a high-tech educational tool which MU - Pleven will introduce not only into student classes but also to perform dissections, preoperative training and surgery planning. Anyone can open their clinical case on

any table or mobile device, which is very useful not only for medical universities and university hospitals but also for long - distance education. The table allows for easy examination, studying and diagnosing a patient through extremely detailed 3D images, generated automatically by a database of real anatomic and medical cases from all over the world. To date, the table is used in more than twenty-five countries, among which Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Mexico, China, USA, Russia and others.

V. Dukova

THE FIFTH LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY SEMINAR AT MU – PLEVEN WITH AN EDITION FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS



On 17 March 2016 MU – Pleven launched the Fifth Laparoscopic and Robotic Surgery seminar for students. This is the first time it has been conducted for foreign students, in English. It was officially launched by Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov at the Telecommunication Endoscopic Center.

The seminar is organized by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov and the students from his Surgery Circle. Active members of the seminar are ten foreign students from the universities in Pleven, Plovdiv and Varna, as well as Romanian medical students.



MEDICAL COLLEGE HELD “TOGETHER WE MAKE OUR DREAMS COME TRUE” CONCERT DEDICATED TO WORLDWIDE SOCIAL WORK DAY

On 15 March 2016, Medical College – Pleven held the now traditional “Together, we make our dreams come true” concert dedicated to World Social Work Day and Global Week of Action (14.03.2016 – 18.03.2016) at the “Katya Popova” hall.

Through the joint effort of “Social Work/Activities” students of Medical College – Pleven and Pleven Municipality, this year again users of social services from Pleven and Pleven region could make their dreams come true through their own creativity.

V. Dukova



FOURTH NATIONAL SCIENCE SESSION FOR “MEDICAL CARE” STUDENTS WAS HELD AT MU – PLEVEN

On 24 and 25 March 2016, MU – Pleven was once again the host of the National student science session with the participation of international “Medical Care” students. The forum was under the slogan “Medical Care in XXI Century – Tendencies and Prospects,” held for the fourth time by the “Medical Care” Faculty at the TELEC halls. There were 171 participants from different universities in the country as well as Dr. Katerina Brojekt.

The event was officially launched by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov, MD, PhD, Honorary chair of the Session. Sixty-six reports and 10 posters were presented and discussed during the event. Assoc. Prof. Evgeniya Dimitrova, one of the organizers of the session, said “There are a lot of challenges to health care in 21 century. It becomes



even more necessary with population ageing, the boom of psychological disease, the demographic collapse as well as the recent economic and political events. That is why health care should continue developing and reaching new heights.”



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – PLEVEN LAUNCHES “MOST PROMINENT STUDENT” CONTEST

With regard to the forthcoming celebration of May 24th, MU – Pleven launched the “Most Prominent Student” Contest for 2016. Bulgarian and foreign students of all faculties can participate as long as they have

excellent marks and are involved in any type of scientific research. Foreign students can compete for the “Excellent mastery of the Bulgarian language – 2016” prize if they have completed their VI semester.

Applications for both prizes will be reviewed by special committees appointed by the Rector. The names of the winners will be posted on the website of the University and the prizes will be awarded on May 24th.



TWO NEAA EXPERT GROUPS VISITED MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – PLEVEN IN MARCH

Two NEAA (National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency) expert groups from Sofia visited Medical University – Pleven in March. The first expert group had a committee consisting of – Head, Assoc. Prof. Neli Spasova, MD, PhD; and members, Prof. Dr. Krasimira Ikonomova, PhD, MD and Gergana Gerdjikova, a student. Observing the procedure was Prof. Dr. Yavor Kalychev, PhD, MD, member of SCHS (Standing Committee of Healthcare and Sports), coordinator was Chief expert Mrs. Anna Sofiyanska. The group visited the University for the period of 09-11.03.2016

in relation to the accreditation of “Medical Laboratory Assistant” major from the regulated professions. Another NEAA expert group visited for the period of 15-17.03.2016 in relation to the accreditation of the University's “Public Health” program. The committee consisted of – Head, Prof. Dr. Silviya Mladenova, PhD, MD; members, Prof. Dr. Ivan Petkov, PhD and Gabriela Petrova, NSA student; observing the procedure was Prof. Dr. Lychezar Dimitrov, PhD, member of SCHS and coordinator as well as Chief expert Mrs. Anna Sofiyanska.



PLEVEN EXPERTS SAVE THE ARM OF HEAVILY INJURED PATIENT WITH UNIQUE SURGERY

After difficult but successful 8-hour-long surgery a medical team composed of specialists from “Dr. Georgi Stranski” University Multi-profile Hospital saved the

functionality of the arm of a heavily injured patient. The complicated and unique surgery was performed by Prof. Dr. Vihar Kovachev (MD), orthopaedist, with the help of another four experts – Dr. Emil Simeonov, Dr. Mancho Kovachev, Dr. Ognyan Matkov, and Dr. Hadjiev – orthopaedic, vascular and neurosurgeons.



FREE NEUROSURGICAL CONSULTATIONS

Head of the Neurosurgery Clinic at “Dr. Georgi Stranski” University Multi-profile Hospital, assoc. Prof. Dr. Yordan Panov, MD conducts free medical consultations Mondays and Thursdays at Medical Centres 2 and 3, Pleven. (Assoc. Prof.) Dr. Panov's initiative was prompted in part by the increase of neurosurgical pathology and in part by the increase of patients who seek specialised assistance when it's

already too late. “Good organisation enables us to take care of patients of a few areas with emergency conditions, such as cerebral haemorrhage,” he added. “We have decided to bring neurosurgical care to the patients and people who find it hard to access. Anyone who needs an expert or second opinion can visit me after they've booked an appointment with the appropriate registry desk.”



FREE CONSULTATIONS FOR WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

In order to mark World Tuberculosis Day (24 March) medical institutions for diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis launched “Open Doors Days” for the week of 21-25 March. Despite tuberculosis being a disease of poor

countries in the past, it is now a problem in developed ones as well. This year's theme, “Unite to End TB,” represents WHO's call to governments and citizens to unite and put an end to the disease. University Multi-profile Hospital – Pleven also participated by examining patients at the Ward for clinical care of patients with pneumophtisiatric diseases.



WORLD KIDNEY DAY AT THE NEPHROLOGY AND DIALYSIS CLINIC AT “DR. GEORGI STRANSKI” UNIVERSITY MULTI-PROFILE HOSPITAL

World Kidney Day was on 10 March this year. The first time the holiday was celebrated was on 9 March 2006 and since then it is observed annually on the second Thursday in March. World Kidney Day is a joint initiative of the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF). In Bulgaria it is organised by the



Bulgarian Kidney Association and the Bulgarian Nephrology Society. The theme this year was “Kidney Disease &

Children. Act Early to Prevent It!”

Once again doctors from the Nephrology and Dialysis Clinic at “Dr. Georgi Stranski” University Multi-profile Hospital, also members of the Association and the Society, took part in the initiative. “After its start in 2006 World Kidney Day became an important and globally observed holiday helping

cont. on p.12

cont. from p.11

raise awareness about kidney disease," said at a press conference the Head of the clinic, Prof. Dr. Vasil Todorov, MD. "Doctors, patients and medical authorities should be united in the early diagnosis and treatment of kidney disease," he noted.

"It is often the case that kidney diseases are not clearly manifested which is why prevention is so important," said Dr. Biser Borisov, MD, assistant at the Nephrology and Dialysis Clinic - Pleven, which is one of

the biggest in Bulgaria. It is staffed by 11 medical doctors (one of which is a professor), 31 nurses, 13 (hospital) attendants and 7 technicians. In 2015 the Clinic treated more than 70 patients with various kidney diseases. "The Clinic uses modern diagnostic methods such as ultrasound, contrast urography, computed tomography, renal biopsy. For comparison, the latter, apart from here, is only performed in Sofia, Varna and Plovdiv," noted Prof. Dr. Vasil

Todorov, MD. He also added that in 2015 the Clinic treated 263 patients: 211 with chronic renal failure and 52 with acute renal failure as well as patients with acute poisoning. 15 740 haemodialysis procedures were performed in 2015 as well as year-long peritoneal dialysis treatments of 10 patients. 191 invasive interventions were performed in 2015, 90 tunnelled catheters were implanted and 77 artery-venous anastomoses were constructed.



OPEN DOORS DAY AT NEPHROLOGY CONSULTING ROOM OF "ST. PANTELEIMON" MEDICAL CENTER - PLEVEN

In order to mark World Kidney Day on 10 March, "St. Panteleimon" Medical Center - Pleven launched an Open Doors Day at the Nephrology consulting room. 20 patients took advantage of the opportunity and had a free medical check-up with a nephrology expert. About 60% of them were diagnosed with kidney stones and another 30% were diagnosed with hypertension with uncertain causes. Follow-up tests were scheduled for the latter.



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY - PLEVEN AUTHORS WITH A SPECIAL AWARD FOR A MEDICAL STUDENT FROM THE SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS OF YOUNG GASTROENTEROLOGISTS

The event was held on 25 and 26 March 2016 at "Queen Giovanna Institute for Internship and Healthcare Improvements (IIHI)" University Multi-profile Hospital. For a second year in a row there was a record number of registered members - 183 graduates, PhD students, interns and gastroenterology experts from Bulgaria, Macedonia, as well as medical students from other medical faculties in Bulgaria.

Forty-two different research works of young physicians from all over Bulgaria were presented. The scientific jury consisted of Prof. Dr. Borislav Vladimirov, MD, Assoc. Prof. Plamen Penchev, Assoc. Prof. Yordan Genov and Assoc. Prof. Branimir Golemanov.

MU - Pleven authors, Plamen Dimitrov, Yoanna Nikolova and Ralitsa Ilieva - fifth year medical students - and their academic advisors - Dr. Emilia Lakova, PhD and Chief Assist. Prof. Genka Krysteva, MD, participated

with a presentation titled "Local renin angiotensin system in the gastrointestinal tract." Plamen Dimitrov presented the research and the jury awarded it the Special award of the Second national congress of young gastro-enterologists.

"The association of young gastroenterologists of Bulgaria" also held its Constituent Assembly during the event. 109 MD from all over the country became co-founders of the association. Dr. Radislav Nakov, MD of "Queen Giovanna - IIHI" University Multi-profile Hospital was elected chair

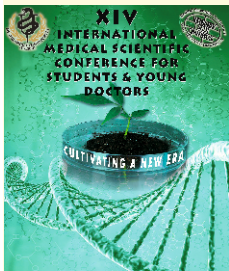
of the Association, Dr. Stanislav Churchev, MD for vice-chair and Dr. Ivan Lyutakov, MD for secretary.

In an interview for *Medical News* Prof. Dr. Borislav Vladimirov, MD expressed his concern for the future of gastroenterology in Bulgaria, "I believe we should not ignore young experts and wait for them to grow old before they are noticed."

Author: Ralitsa Ilieva



XIV INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONFERENCE OF STUDENTS AND YOUNG PHYSICIAN



Medical University – Pleven will host the XIV International medical conference of students and young physicians between 10-15 October 2016. The scientific forum is organised by students and will be themed “Cultivating a new era.”

Due to the great interest of participants in the previous conference, Prof. Tsvetomir Loukanov, MD, PhD, paediatric heart surgeon at University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany, will once again be a guest.

Students and young physicians will have a chance to present their scientific research in medicine. Registration for active and passive participants is already open. Early registry is open until 31 May and late registry – until 31 August 2016.

Article for Academia Medica by Aygulya Akisheva

MU-PLEVEN HOSTED NATIONAL MEET OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS OF BULGARIA

MU-Pleven hosted the XXIX national meet of the Association of medical students of Bulgaria (AMSB) from 18 until 20 March. The event was organised by AMSB-Pleven with the backing of MU-Pleven and the Student Council (SC) of MU-Pleven. The forum was opened in “Ambroise Paré” hall of the Telecommunication Endoscopic Center at Medical University – Pleven by Hristiyan Minchev, Chair of AMSB of *Thrace University*, Stara Zagora and Emel Emin, Chair of AMSB-Pleven. Prof. Dr. Margarita Alexandrova, PhD, DSc, Vice-Rector of Education and Zvezdina Goranova, Chair of SC at MU-Pleven attended the event. One of the original founders of AMSB-Pleven Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov MD, PhD made a video presentation entitled “A case of non-invasive HIFU ablation on a patient with an intramural myoma nodule.” Collaboration between AMSB committees - “Medical Education”, “Reproductive Health and AIDS”, “Public Health”, “Human Rights and Peace”, “Professional and Scientific Exchange”, “Public Relations” and the Chairman committee - was deemed as very beneficial.

An open discussion meeting “The Future of AMSB” was also held during the event. Following established tradition, local branches of AMSB presented their campaigns on *Project Fair* and the best of them were awarded.

Article for Academia Medica by Aygulya Akisheva

MU-PLEVEN REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS IN MALTA

The March General Assembly of International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) was held in Malta between 27 February and 8 March 2016. The General Assembly is held twice a year – in March and in August. The one in Malta was the most attended one so far. More than 1300 participants from more than 116 countries were present. 16 medical students, members of AMSB, represented Bulgaria. Medical University – Pleven was represented by Emel Emin, a third year student, chair of AMSB-Pleven and Tsvetan Mladenov, a fourth year student in charge of scientific exchange at AMSB-Pleven.

IFMSA activities are divided in six committees – *Public Health, Human Rights and Peace, Reproductive Health and AIDS, Medical Education, Professional and Scientific Exchange*. Tsvetan Mladenov participated in the sessions and work groups of his respective committee, while Emel participated in NMO Management sessions where topics relating to the future of AMSB were discussed.

Article for Academia Medica by Emel Emin



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – PLEVEN TO HOST AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENT

By the initiative of the Student Council, and backed by Sports Sector, Medical University – Pleven will host an Amateur Sports Tournament from 13 until 22 April. The tournament includes football and table tennis on Monday and Wednesday, basketball and volleyball on Tuesday and Thursday, and badminton on Friday.



FIRST DAY OF SPRING

In order to mark the coming of spring the *Human Rights and Peace* committee with AMSB - Pleven organized a tree-planting campaign in the courtyard of the *Detelina* orphanage in Pleven.



Georgi Kafadarov, a fourth year student and member of the committee, and five more students ran the campaign on 29 March 2016. The students, with the help of children from the orphanage, planted four trees which aimed to teach the children to conserve the environment.

Article for Academia Medica by Aygulya Akisheva

THANK YOU, DOCTOR!



AMSB - Plev en once again organized the "Thank you, Doctor!" campaign to celebrated the World Health and World Social Work Day on 7 April. The event was

organized by Georgi Kafadorov, a fourth year student and local representative of the *Committee of Human Rights and Peace* with AMSB-Pleven. Seven other students also participated.

Citizens of Plev en could write and submit thank you letters in post boxes placed in the center of the city, in the foyer of MU-Pleven's main building and at the entrance of the First clinic of "Dr. Georgi Stranski" University Multi-profile Hospital on 4th and 5th April 2016. More than 70 letters were collected and delivered to physicians on their professional holiday.

Article for Academia Medica by Aygulya Akisheva

9 YEARS MEDICAL CENTER "CLINICAL INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE ST. ELISAVETA" - PLEVEN

In order to celebrate 9 years since it was founded, Medical Center "Clinical Institute for Reproductive Medicine St. Elisaveta" - Plev en held an Open Doors Day. Free examinations and consultations with obstetricians, gynecologists, endocrinologists and andrologists were made in the Center on 13 April.

The team at Medical Center "Clinical Institute for Reproductive

Medicine St. Elisaveta" - Plev en is happy with the results of their work for nine years - 939 babies delivered after successful IVF procedures, announced on 11 April head of the Center, Prof. Dr. Emiliana Konova, MD, PhD at a press conference at Plev en's BNA club. 1979 IVF procedures were performed during the 9 years which means that they have a success rate of 46.31%.

"ARE YOU SICK, TEDDY?" CAMPAIGN ORGANIZED BY AMSB-PLEVEN STUDENTS FOR GABROVO CHILDREN



The sixth annual "Are you sick, teddy?" campaign was organized by AMSB-Pleven, backed by the Pulmonary Hypertension Association and the National Alliance of People with Rare

Diseases. Terra Mall-Gabrovo hosted the event for a second year. Each child could bring their favorite stuffed toy to be treated in the improvised teddy bear hospital. The "parent" had to first register their sick teddy. Then, they would be directed to a pediatrician, ENT expert, ophthalmologist, surgeon, orthopedist, cardiologist or a pulmonologist. More than 30 children visited the improvised consulting rooms.

There was also a pharmacy where "parents" could buy prescribed medicine - candy - to treat their teddies. Children aged 2-8 could overcome their fear of the *white gown* through fun games.



FOR THE THIRD TIME, MU-PLEVEN WILL HOST AN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY SEMINAR FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PHYSICIANS IN MAY

MU-Plev en will host for the third time a Modern seminar of obstetrics and gynecology from 27 to 29 May. It is organized by the Association of Medical Students of Bulgaria - Plev en and the Student Council of Medical University - Plev en under the patronage of the Rector, Prof. Dr. Slavcho Tomov, MD, PhD, DSc.

Main topics to be discussed during the seminar include prophylaxis, diagnostics and treatment of female reproductive system and breast diseases. Problems of pregnancy and its possible complications, problems of fetal surgery as well as the application of a multi-disciplinary approach will also be discussed. Students, graduates, PhD students and young physicians will also have the opportunity to present their research.



During recent years, MC CIRP expanded its activities in more cities - there is a consultation room in Burgas and a MC CIRP opened in Plovdiv at the end of last year. The Center also donates a lot to charity. It is going to fund the repairs of a consulting room at the Home for Medical and Social Care for Children where psychologists work with children.



MC CIRP-PLEVEN AWARDED “TRUSTWORTHY BUSINESS OF 2016” CERTIFICATE

Medical Center 'Clinical Institute for Reproductive Medicine – Pleven' was awarded a “Business” certificate for a flawless reputation amid clients and contractors throughout the country, without a single negative opinion and only positive comments on the Internet. The results were revealed after an analysis by “Consumer Reports Research Center” Ltd. – Burgas.

The “Trustworthy Business” project was launched in 2013 by CBOK Sp. z o. o. with

their main office in Poland. Its goal is to provide potential clients access to business that offer high quality services. In 2014 the project was introduced to the Czech Republic and Hungary, and in the beginning of 2015, it was also introduced to Bulgaria, Slovakia, France and Romania.



FREE EYE EXAMINATIONS DURING WORLD GLAUCOMA WEEK

The World Glaucoma Association and the World Glaucoma Patient Association launched the first World Glaucoma Day on 6 March 2008. Since 2010 the initiatives dedicated to treating the disease have expanded the holiday into a week. Glaucoma is one of the most frequent causes for irreversible blindness on a global scale. Between 70 and 80 000 people suffer from it in Bulgaria. It is recommended that people over 30 years of age go through annual eye examinations which measure sight as well as ocular pressure. The theme this year was “Beat Invisible Glaucoma” (B-I-G).

In order to celebrate World Glaucoma Week, from 7 until 12 March the Ophthalmology consulting room at “St. Panteleimon” Medical Center – Pleven offered free medical check-ups. More than a hundred patients were examined and about 10% of them were scheduled future appointments to decide on a proper diagnosis.

The Pleven “Oculus” ophthalmology centre also entered the campaign this year. The centre offered free examinations to patients, who are not diagnosed with glaucoma, on 12 March 2016.



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