MY LIFE AS A CLINICIAN, RESEARCHER AND EDITOR

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Tsvetoslav Georgiev¹ <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1652-4648>

¹First Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University – Varna, Varna, Bulgaria

E-mail: tsetso@medfaculty.org

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INTRODUCTION

At present, I am an assistant (in transition to associate) professor at the First Department of Internal Medicine, Medical University - Varna, Bulgaria. I am also a consultant in rheumatology at the University Hospital St. Marina. My research specialization is in the field of osteoarthritis, musculoskeletal imaging and biomarkers, and recently in the field of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Hobbies? They are no longer on the agenda after the birth of my second child. If a hobby is to spend time with my beloved ones, this is my necessary consolation from work and research. Nevertheless, as most academicians, my research activities directly compete for the time I spend with the people closest to me. Moreover, my wife is also a part-time doctoral student and is investing all her free time in a PhD thesis. Both of us are still looking to finetune the balance between family and work.

My research career

My academic and research career started off in 2013 in the Medical University – Sofia under the supervision of Professor Rumen Stoilov and under the precise guidance of Associate Professor Mariana Ivanova and Prof. Rasho Rashkov. In 2018, I successfully defended my PhD thesis focused on biomarkers in osteoarthritis diagnosis and management in the rheumatology clinic of the University Hospital St. Ivan Rilski in Sofia, Bulgaria. Meanwhile, from 2014 to 2018, I was a resident at the same hospital where I acquired a specialty in rheumatology. I am passionate

about practising musculoskeletal ultrasound and I hold an intermediate-level certificate (EULAR).

During the preparation of my PhD thesis, I caught my first glimpse of international success in 2017 when I, under the supervision of Professor Rumen Stoilov and Associate Professor Mariana Ivanova, published my first article in the high-impact journal *Rheumatology International (RHEI)*. The confirmation email that your article is accepted for publication was the best present for my 30th jubilee. Thereafter, as a reviewer, then as an editorial board (EB) member for *RHEI*, I began to work side by side with my mentor and close friend (if I may) Professor Armen Gasparyan who actually enlightened me for quality science writing, reviewing and editing.

Recently, my candidacy was approved as a member of social media steering subcommittee of EMerging EULAR NETwork (EMEUNET). EMEUNET is one of the EULAR Representation Committees bringing “on board high quality, young generation contributors in all EULAR activities”.

My editorial career (mentors, path, and main achievements)

Since 2017, I have been reviewing for some of the most influential scientific journals in the field of rheumatology and medicine: *RHEI*, *Clinical Rheumatology*, *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage*, *BMJ Open*, *Medicine*, *Journal of Korean Medical Science (JKMS)*, *SN Comprehensive Clinical Medicine*, *Journal of Experimental Orthopedics*, *Medical Principles and Practice*, *Archives of Rheumatology*,

etc. As of September 11, 2021, I have authored more than 300 verified reviews in 30 peer-reviewed scientific journals according to my Publons record. In relation to my work as a reviewer, I received Publons Awards as being in the top 1% reviewer in Clinical Medicine in 2018 and 2019. Apart from this, I was awarded by the JKMS as the Best Reviewer in the field of Rheumatology in 2019 and 2021.

After being part of the EB of *RHEI* and completing numerous reviews, I was invited to join as an associate editor of the journal. Not long after, I received an invitation to become an

editorial staff of SN Comprehensive Clinical Medicine. Importantly, I accomplished those achievements in collaboration with my mentor Professor Armen Gasparyan to whom I owe most of my knowledge in the art of writing scientific articles. I now realize that publishing an article is not the final stage of commitment, as its promotion is just as important. My long-term training will be enhanced by in-person attendance to congresses and webinars in scientific writing, reviewing, and editing.

How research, education and science editing transform amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?

Without a doubt, COVID-19 has caught most scientists off guard. Researchers had no other option but to go online. Initially, we all thought that this shift to virtual will be transient. Nevertheless, research and education will probably never be the same after the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the idea of providing knowledge in dedicated rooms and in-person meetings will most probably look morally obsolete in a few years. Obviously, major in-person events such as international congresses and conferences have begun to appear like a mirage to date. Although this fact evokes a certain amount of nostalgia, the virtual environment offers us the same or similar experience available at a click away. Rheumatology education and conferencing across Europe and the Globe are now more affordable than ever and therefore accessible.

From a personal perspective, I now have more time to participate and involve in webinars dedicated to rheumatology science. Nevertheless, the lack of practical seminars and workshops has hampered the improvement of my practical skills such as in the areas of musculoskeletal ultrasound and capillaroscopy in rheumatology.

Research and education through the prism of COVID-19

So far, Bulgaria has faced four major COVID-19 waves with tens of thousands of deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 infection. The low rates of vaccination and the skepticism of the Bulgarian population about the COVID-19 vaccines are unfavorable indicators for dealing with the crisis. During the peak incidence, rheumatology-related health care, research and education are mostly disturbed owing to mobilization of the whole health force, including teaching clinicians in medical universities across the country. This scenario is easy to realize and grasp.

Importantly, the most underprivileged in the pandemic situation are undoubtedly the medical students undergoing training in clinical specialties. I really empathize with my students who experienced difficulties in their first steps toward communication with patients. Teaching clinicians, on the other hand, is often busy, and although before patient management and student teaching went hand in hand and complemented each other, things do not appear very simple right now. Working with COVID-19 patients requires complete isolation and frightens both teachers and students.

As an assistant professor in rheumatology, practicals and seminars have been transformed almost entirely into virtual sessions, which can barely develop skills such as working with patients on medical history and physical examination, mastering techniques from daily practice such as musculoskeletal ultrasound and capillaroscopy. After all, their real exam will take place next to the patient's bed just in few years.

How Bulgaria may benefit from quality research, peer review, and editing?

Recently, rheumatology practice and science from Bulgaria has been appraised in a peer-reviewed article that I co-authored with the president of the Bulgarian Rheumatology Society. Our overall impression was that certain challenges unique to our cost-constraint situation should be addressed so that Bulgarian rheumatology could take its rightful place among other European nations. Since then, major progress has been made as a result of the arrangement of some very important seminars and webinars on ethical scientific writing, editing and reviewing. It was regrettable that those webinars were not attended by many of the invited participants owing to the direct involvement

of many colleagues in the pandemic. We have also been able to invite Professor Armen Gasparyan as an EB member and an editorial advisor in our society journal *Rheumatology (Bulgaria)*. Consequently, we have made the first steps in digitizing the journal and updated its

ethical policies in line with editorial strategies to sustain our indexing in Scopus. As a result, *Rheumatology (Bulgaria)* now attracts more authors and EB members from abroad.

My message to ongoing researchers, educators, and editors in Central Asia

Importantly, during my career as a researcher and academician, I had the opportunity to collaborate with the most successful minds in the field of rheumatology who became my dedicated mentors. To me, research is freedom: freedom to share my ideas and thoughts on the right path of spiritual development. With this in mind, I aim to share some highlights of my research journey anticipating to “generate” the same academic enthusiasm among CAJMHE readers.

My advice to young scientists in Central Asia is to always seize the opportunities that open up before them. They should not be passive, but they should participate actively and not be deterred by restrictions related to funding. Science can be conducted in a cost-constrained environment. Importantly, when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. In other words: do not miss the opportunities that life has prepared for you and do not give up at first rejection. In fact, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, or Bulgaria all sound very exotic to the western world, and quality studies from us will be highly appreciated as they advance knowledge and cultural diversity.

Fig. 1. Tsvetoslav Georgiev during his residency at the University Hospital St. Ivan Rilski

Fig. 2. University hospital St. Marina, Varna, Bulgaria

Fig. 3. Rheumatology clinic amidst the COVID-19 crisis

МЕНІҢ КЛИНИЦИСТ, ЗЕРТТЕУШІ ЖӘНЕ РЕДАКТОР РЕТІНДЕГІ ӨМІРІМ

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МОЯ ЖИЗНЬ В КАЧЕСТВЕ КЛИНИЦИСТА, ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЯ И РЕДАКТОРА

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