

To

Members of the Scientific Jury,

appointed by an Executive Order #R-109-93/21.03.2024

of the Rector of Medical University – Varna

OPINION

By **Prof. Dr. Anton Bozhidarov Tonchev, PhD.**

internal member for MU-Varna, habilitated in professional field 7.1 Medicine, Medical
University – Varna

Concerning: Call for appointment of the academic position “Professor”, in the field of higher education 7. Health and sport, professional field 7.1. Medicine, specialty “Gastroenterology” – 0.5 post for the needs of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology of the Faculty of Medicine at the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov”-Varna and one post for the needs of the “Gastroenterology” Clinic at the University Hospital “St. Marina EAD-Varna, promulgated in SG No 7 of 23.1.2024.

One candidate participates in the competition: **Prof. Antonia Yordanova Atanasova, PhD**, from the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University-Varna and the Clinic of Gastroenterology at St. Marina Hospital – Varna.

The required complete set of documents was presented in accordance with the requirements of the ZRASRB and the of the MU-Varna Regulations for the occupation of academic position “**Professor**”, on the basis of the normative documents of Article 4(1) and (2), Article 29(1) of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), Article 6(1) and Article 139(3) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University of Varna.

Conclusion: **No procedural violations have been identified.**

I. Analysis of the candidate's career profile

1. Education and qualification

Examination of this part of the documentation shows that A. Atanasova is eligible for completed higher education in medicine (attached diploma from the University of Medical Sciences – Varna), has acquired a degree in Internal Diseases since 1994 and speciality Gastroenterology since 1996. The applicant has obtained the Doctor of Science in the PhD program in Gastroenterology with the topic "Clinical Assessment of Patients with ulcerative colitis-Modern Approach" (diploma from 2014) and the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the scientific specialty Gastroenterology.

2. Work experience and specialisations

Assoc. A. Atanasova has total work experience over 37 years, of which teaching over 36 years. From 1987 to 1994 he was Junior Assistant Professor, from 1994 to 1997 he was a senior assistant, from 1997 to 2015. — Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of Internal Diseases, University of Gastroenterology of Medical University – Varna. Since 2015 he has been Associate Professor at the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology.

Antonia Atanasova participated in the international program TEMPUS-PHARE/JEP09839-95 "Restructuring medical education" France, Franche-Comte-Besanson University, Clinic of Hepatology and Clinic of Gastroenterology at Jean-Minjo University Hospital, Prof. Jean-Philipp Migue, 16.02-10.04.1998. The applicant has acquired a number of abbreviations: Certificate of professional qualification and highly specialised activity first and second level; Diagnostic upper and lower gastrointestinal endoscopy – first level and second level; Diagnostic Abdominal Echoscapy – Level 1; Abdominal Doppler echography in gastroenterology; and Dr. Atanasova is also a consultant to the expert center on cystic fibrosis, since 2019.

3. Study workload and teaching activities

The attached report on **the study workload** of Dr. Atanasova shows that for the last 4 years she has between 167 and 219 hours per year, with a norm of 110 hours.

- ✓ Assoc. Dr. A. Atanasova regularly teaches seminars in Gastroenterology for 5th grade students of Medicine, practical exercises within the framework of Elective Course in Abdominal Ultrasonography for 5th grade students of Medicine, seminar classes with

graduate students in gastroenterology, seminar classes with trainee-doctors 6th grade, practical exercises with postgraduates in gastroenterology in the field of "Abdominal Ultrasonography", practical exercises with specialists in gastroenterology in the "Fibroesophago-Gastroduodenoscopy" region, practical exercises with gastroenterology specialists in the area of "fibrocolonoscopy". Dr. A. Atanasova lectures in the field of socially significant problems in gastroenterology, application of various drugs in clinical practice, clinical cases, etc. within the framework of the WAD: before general practitioners, gastroenterologists in pre-hospital care and gastroenterologists from different regions in Bulgaria and at national conferences. She leads seminar exercises in CSE with students 1st year in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Medicine and Dental Medicine, Exercises in Planchnology Microscopic Part in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Dental Medicine, Lectures in Anatomy and Cell Biology (Splanchnology Section) – Students 1st grade Medicine, lectures on Anatomy (full course) – MU-Varna students, MC – public health inspectors, lectures on propedeutics of internal diseases – students Faculty of Medicine, 3rd grade, lectures in Internal Diseases for 5th grade students of Medicine.

- ✓ Dr. Antonia Atanasova is the scientific director of three PhD students one in the doctoral program "Gastroenterology" and two under the doctoral program "Internal Diseases". Two of the doctoral students: Dr. Elena Panayotova Panayotova, MD (Doctoral Program "Internal Diseases") and Dr. Mirela Moneva-Petrova, Mm (Doctoral Program "Gastroenterology") successfully defended their doctoral thesis and acquired the degree "Doctor"/PhD.
- ✓ She is the head of two national and educational projects funded by the Science Fund: "Metabolic syndrome in patients with inflammatory bowel diseases. Started in 2020, successfully completed and evaluated in January 2023; The other project "Research of modern biomarkers in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease"/FH-13/09.01.24, started in early 2024. A participant in an international project: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme CD SKILLS – 2019-2022 – funded by the European Union. She participated as a researcher in a national and educational project funded by the Science Fund "Ethiology, clinical picture and diagnosis of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in children and adolescents", 21.12.2020 – 21.12.2022.

- ✓ Dr. Antonia Atanasova is a participant in joint developments of the scientific interdisciplinary group on "Gastro-entero-hepatoprotection and Therapy" within the Scientific Research Institute at MU-Varna.
- ✓ She had participated in the scientific jury of six PhD students for the award of an educational and scientific degree "doctor", to one candidate for "docent" and in the selection of six assistants as "principal assistant".
- ✓ Dr. A. Atanasova is a participant in an examination committee for acquiring a specialty in gastroenterology, Sofia, ISUL, University Hospital "Tsaritsa Yoanna" Sofia, Examination Commission for State Examination in Internal Diseases AEO and BEA, Medical University-Varna, Examination Committee, semester examination in Internal Diseases, AEO and BEA, MU-Varna.

II. A general description of the submitted competition materials.

The documentation is complete and accurate, presented in logical order according to the requirements of the competition.

III. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific work for the overall academic development.

Dr. Antonia Atanasova participates in this competition with the following scientific papers after the habilitation as an associate professor:

- ✓ Habilitation work – ten equivalent scientific publications, which are referenced and indexed in world-famous databases of scientific information with a total number of bibliographical sources 341;
- ✓ Dissertation for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"
- ✓ Full-text articles published in Bulgarian and foreign scientific journals – 67, including in journals with IF.
- ✓ Abstracts of reports in periodical journals and collections presented at national and international congresses, conferences, symposia and sessions in Bulgaria and abroad.
- ✓ Total participation in 71 scientific forums, 52 in Bulgaria and 19 abroad and 23 participations in schools, training courses and practices in Bulgaria and abroad.

With an impact factor (IF) there are 3 publications in full text with IF-7.7, after the choice of associate professor.

Prof. A. Atanasova, PhD, is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Union, the Bulgarian National Society of Gastroenterology with Gastrointestinal Endoscopy and Abdominal Echography, the Bulgarian Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, the Bulgarian Society of Child Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition and the European Crohn Colitis Organisation.

IV. Evaluation of the publications submitted for participation in the competition.

Dr. Antonia Atanasova, presents in her paper 10 publications replacing a habilitation work. These are the full-text scientific publications in publications referred to in the academic report, which are quoted in referenced and indexed in the global database of scientific information – *Web of Science* and *Scopus*. These publications carry 336.5 points at a minimum of 100. In 60 % (6 pcs.; No 3,4,5,6,9,10 of these publications Assoc. Atanasova is the first author. In 40 % (4pcs; No. 3,4,5,6 is the sole author. The remaining 40 % is second author (No 8), third author (No 2) and consecutive author (No. 1,7). Three (30 %) of the submitted publications have Impact Factor (IF): No. 2,8,9 as their total IF = 7.7 and have been published over the past four years. In publications with IF candidate Assoc. Atanasova is the first author (No. 9 of 2022), second author (No 8 of 2022) and third author (No 2, 2020). These facts conclusively reveal the personal involvement of Assoc. Atanasova in the publications presented, as well as the lasting interests in certain areas of publishing activity. Eighty percent of the publications submitted contain original work (No 3,4,5,6,9), results achieved in teamwork (No 2,7,8) and only 20 % (2 articles) are devoted to literature review (No 1,10) and one article contains its own results, such as clinical cases with observation and literature review (No 7).

Scientific contributions can be summarized in 10 main directions. A major area of high scientific interest in the years has been inflammatory bowel disease (IBD): all aspects from disease detection to IBD monitoring and prognostics are under study. The main contributions of this group of studies are: the introduction of an innovative approach using microribonucleic acids (miRNAs) in diagnosis, monitoring and customisation of treatment in IBD, which was first applied in Bulgaria. These publications have **original theoretical, practical and practical contributions**. For the first time in Bulgaria, the detailed and comprehensive application of a miRNAs panel in adult patients with IBD is reflected. A reliable, accurate and detailed description of the expression of individual miRNAs in IBD patients with remission was performed.

The contributions of publications in the field of chronic liver diseases are applied. The modern concepts of the clinic, diagnosis and therapeutic behavior in various liver diseases are systematised: chronic viral hepatitis, metabolic diseases (Wilson's disease), metabolically induced liver fat disease, Gilbert's syndrome, malignant liver tumors. Publications in the field of metabolic syndrome, obesity and overweight have applied contributions. Some potential mechanisms of influence of obesity on the most common and socially significant gastroenterological diseases have been systematised. The section of publications on the topic of vitamin D has a marked applied contribution. A correlation was found between serum expression of the miRNAs study panel and vitamin D levels in patients with IBD. An analysis of miRNAs expression was performed according to vitamin D levels. For the first time in Bulgaria, studies on vitamin D levels have been published, a relationship between the expression of certain miRNAs and vitamin D deficiency in patients with IBD has been demonstrated. It is also worth noting the publications in the sections of preventable infectious diseases, therapy of gastroenterological diseases that have a theoretical and applied contribution, and some of them have been published abroad in journals cited and reviewed and indexed in world-famous databases of scientific information and IF. Innovative and original and at the same time theoretical and applied contributions are research on the new marker of cell death – RIPK3, which detects necroptosis in patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and can be applied as a prognostic factor in the course of different treatment regimens. Theoretic-methodological and practical contributions are publications in the field of HLA genotyping in celiac patients and their relatives and genetic results in suspected Gilbert disease. For the first time in Bulgaria, results of genetic studies in these groups of patients are published. Various clinical cases from gastroenterological practice are presented. These various publications have mainly practical and applied contributions.

V. Quotation of the candidate's publications.

Scientific works are cited in are mainly abroad – 29 bibliographic sources (after her appointment as an Associate Professor) – 27 citations or reviews in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes; 2 citations or reviews in unrefereed journals with scientific review abroad.

VII. Overall assessment of the applicant's compliance with the mandatory conditions and mandatory quantitative criteria and scientometric indicators

The documents provided comply with the requirements of the normative documents of Article 4(1) and (2) of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), Article 6(1) and Article 139(3) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University – Varna. No procedural violations have been identified.

Dr. Atanasova meets the general requirements for the academic position "Professor": she has completed higher medical education, acquired specialties, the degrees "Doctor"/PhD and "Doctor of Sciences" in the scientific specialty: Gastroenterology, as well as the mandatory quantitative scientific criteria, which are required for "Professor".

A table of mandatory quantitative scientific criteria and indicators of the applicant can be summarised as follows:

Indicator	Minimum Scientometer Requirements of MU-Varna (Number of points)	Provided in the academic practice of Assoc.A. Atanasova (Number of points)
A1 Dissertation work for acquiring the NSA "Doctor"	50	50
B2 Dissertation paper for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"		100
B4 Habilitation Work= not less than 10 publications that are published in publications that are referenced and indexed in a	100	336.5

world-famous database of scientific information		
D7-9 Other publications	200	884.31
D10-12 Quotations	100	310
E13-22 Doctors and Projects	100	295
Total	550	1975. 81

IX. Conclusion

Having examined in detail the documentation provided to me and making a comprehensive assessment of the scientific, research and teaching activity of the participant in the competition for holding the academic position **“Professor”** in the scientific speciality ***Gastroenterology***, I am convinced that the candidate: **Antonia Yordanova Atanasova, MD, PhD, meets the requirements of ZRASRB and the Regulations of Medical University-Varna for holding an academic position “Professor”.**

Author of the opinion:

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