

# OPINION

by

**Assoc. Prof. Bozhidar Krasimirov Hristov, MD, PhD**

Medical University – Plovdiv

**Regarding the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Aleksandar Valeriev Yordanov entitled: "Risk Factors and Clinical Follow-up in Patients with Upper Gastrointestinal Bleeding" submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree Doctor (PhD) in the scientific specialty Gastroenterology**

---

In my capacity as a reviewer, appointed by Rector's Order No. P-109-189/19.05.2026 of the Medical University of Varna, and pursuant to the Academic Staff Development Act and the Regulations for its implementation at the Medical University of Varna, I present the following opinion. The subject of Dr. Aleksandar Valeriev Yordanov's dissertation addresses an important and highly relevant issue in medical science and gastroenterology, namely upper gastrointestinal bleeding—one of the most common and potentially life-threatening emergencies encountered in clinical practice. Despite the significant advances achieved in diagnostic and therapeutic approaches over recent decades, upper gastrointestinal bleeding remains associated with substantial morbidity, mortality, and healthcare expenditure. The diversity of etiological factors, clinical manifestations, and the risk of recurrent bleeding necessitates accurate assessment of patients upon admission as well as careful follow-up throughout treatment. Particular importance is attached to the identification of risk factors determining the severity of bleeding, the need for urgent intervention, the likelihood of recurrent hemorrhage, and overall prognosis. In this context, the development and validation of clinical, laboratory, and endoscopic predictors for risk stratification represent one of the major contemporary directions in gastroenterology.

The dissertation comprises **230 pages**, structured as follows: Table of Contents – 2 pages List of Abbreviations – 2 pages Introduction – 1 page Literature Review – 47 pages Aim and Objectives – 2 pages Materials and Methods – 7 pages Results and Discussion – 148 pages Conclusion – 1 page Conclusions, Contributions and Recommendations – 3 pages Bibliography – 16 pages Publications and Scientific Presentations Related to the Dissertation – 1 page.

The proportion between the individual sections is appropriate and well balanced.

The literature review is up-to-date and logically structured. It begins with an overview of upper gastrointestinal bleeding as one of the most frequent emergency conditions in gastroenterology, associated with considerable morbidity and mortality. The main forms of upper gastrointestinal bleeding are subsequently discussed, with particular emphasis on non-variceal bleeding. Contemporary data regarding epidemiology, risk factors—including the role of medications associated with increased bleeding risk—and concomitant diseases are presented, together with the principal etiological and pathogenetic mechanisms. The diagnostic and therapeutic algorithm for non-variceal bleeding is comprehensively analyzed, highlighting the importance of early endoscopy and modern endoscopic hemostatic techniques. The following section focuses on variceal upper gastrointestinal bleeding. The pathophysiological mechanisms of portal hypertension and the development of esophageal and gastric varices are thoroughly

presented. The dissertation also analyzes the criteria for identifying high-risk varices, current approaches to screening and primary prophylaxis, and recommended management algorithms for acute variceal bleeding according to current international guidelines.

Special attention is devoted to risk factors determining bleeding severity, the probability of recurrence, and adverse outcomes. Clinical, laboratory, and endoscopic prognostic indicators are comprehensively discussed, together with the most widely used risk assessment scoring systems, including the **Glasgow-Blatchford Score, Rockall Score, AIMS65, and ABC Score**. The author appropriately emphasizes the importance of early risk stratification for optimizing therapeutic management and improving patient prognosis.

It is particularly impressive that such complex material has been presented in a clear, comprehensible, and well-organized manner, demonstrating the author's thorough understanding of the subject.

The aim and the seven research objectives are clearly formulated.

The study population consisted of **209 patients** (138 men and 71 women), examined between **February 2021 and March 2024** at the **St. Marina University Hospital, Varna**.

Among them:

- 41 patients had liver cirrhosis;
- 27 were receiving NSAIDs;
- 10 glucocorticosteroids;
- 54 antiplatelet agents;
- 72 anticoagulants;
- and 3 selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

The study also analyzed non-pharmacological risk factors, including alcohol consumption in 79 patients, cigarette smoking in 84 patients, and illicit drug use in 6 patients.

Clinical, biochemical, and instrumental investigations are presented in detail. Modern statistical methods were appropriately applied for data processing and analysis.

The nine summarized conclusions are specific, accurate, logically derived from the obtained results, and fully supported by the presented evidence.

The dissertation presents **ten scientific contributions**, among which the most significant is that, for the first time in a Bulgarian clinical cohort, the differential prognostic performance of the various scoring systems has been evaluated with respect to major clinical endpoints, including in-hospital mortality, recurrent bleeding, and the need for therapeutic intervention.

The candidate has published **seven scientific papers** related to the dissertation, including **two in internationally indexed peer-reviewed journals**, and has participated in **five scientific conferences**.

The bibliography contains **266 references**, including **4 in Cyrillic and 264 in Latin script**. More than two-thirds of the cited references have been published within the last ten years, while approximately 25% originate from the last five years. All cited publications are directly relevant

to the investigated problem and have been appropriately incorporated in accordance with the aims and objectives of the dissertation.

## Conclusion

Based on the above considerations, I conclude that the dissertation entitled "**Risk Factors and Clinical Follow-up in Patients with Upper Gastrointestinal Bleeding**" by **Dr. Aleksandar Valeriev Yordanov** fully satisfies the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree **Doctor (PhD)**.

23 June 2026

Member of the Scientific Jury

Assoc. Prof. **Bozhidar K. Hristov, MD, PhD**

Заличено на основание чл. 5,  
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)  
2016/679