

OPINION

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Regarding: competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 7 - "Health and Sports" under the professional field 7.1 "Medicine" and the scientific specialty "Gastroenterology" for the needs of the Clinic of Gastroenterology, Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University Hospital JSC, announced in State Gazette No. 85 of 14.10.2025.

The sole candidate in the competition is Dr. Rozalina Ivanova Balabanska, MD, Chief Assistant at the Clinic of Gastroenterology, Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University Hospital JSC. A complete set of documents has been submitted for the preparation of this opinion, in accordance with the requirements of ZRASRB and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University Hospital JSC.

I. Professional Development

Dr. Rozalina Ivanova Balabanska graduated in medicine from MA - Sofia in 1987. She worked as a district physician at the III Polyclinic, District Hospital "Rachila Angelova" in Pernik by assignment. From 1991 to 1994, she worked as a gastroenterologist at the Military Medical Academy - Clinic of Gastroenterology, and from 1994 to 2007, she worked as a staff physician in the Gastroenterology Department at the Clinic of Internal Diseases of the 5th General Hospital - Sofia. From March 2007 to the present, she has successively worked as a staff physician, assistant, and chief assistant at the Clinic of Gastroenterology at ASK-Tokuda. She has recognized two clinical specialties - internal medicine (1996) and gastroenterology (1999). In 2021, she obtained a PhD after successfully defending a dissertation on the topic: "Liver Steatosis and Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis - Clinical Assessment and Application of Transient Elastography (Fibroscan)." Dr. Balabanska has participated in courses and specializations in gastroenterology at prestigious clinical centers and institutions in Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, and France. She continuously enhances her clinical skills. She has successively acquired qualifications and the right to perform abdominal ultrasound at Level I, Doppler ultrasound, and the highest Level III – interventional abdominal ultrasound.

Dr. Rozalina Balabanska is a respected physician and established specialist in the diagnosis and treatment of gastrointestinal and liver diseases. She has extensive clinical experience in performing abdominal ultrasound, as well as conducting liver biopsies and invasive procedures under ultrasound guidance. She is a pioneer in introducing transient elastography with Fibroscan in Bulgaria and has made an undeniable contribution to establishing this method in our country for non-invasive assessment of liver damage, which is reflected in her dissertation work.

Dr. Balabanska is a member of the Bulgarian Society of Gastroenterology, Gastrointestinal

Endoscopy, and Abdominal Ultrasound; the Bulgarian Association for Ultrasound in Medicine; the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL); the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD); and the European Federation of Societies for Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology (EFSUMB). She is fluent in English and Russian.

II. Research Activity

Dr. Rosalina Balabanska is participating in the competition with a total of one monograph and 58 scientific publications, of which 28 are in peer-reviewed scientific journals indexed in Scopus/Web of Science, including 25 with IF; 28 in the National Reference List, and 2 in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review. The candidate is the sole and first author in 17, and second author in 17 of the 58 discussed publications, meaning she is the leading author in 34/58 of the titles, which demonstrates her leading contribution in the development of the presented scientific works. From 1994 to 2025, Dr. Rozalina Balabanska has participated with posters or oral presentations in 48 scientific forums, 21 of which were in Bulgaria and 27 abroad.

The report from the Central Medical Library of MU – Sofia shows that 635 citations of Dr. Balabanska's scientific works were found in the Scopus database. In Web of Science, 625 citations were identified. A list of 11 citations in Cyrillic found in Bulgarian scientific publications is attached.

From the attached reports, it is evident that the total impact factor (IF) of Dr. Balabanska's scientific works is 34.643. The candidate has an H index of: Scopus – 4 and Web of Science – 6.

Dr. Balabanska is actively engaged in research activities in international clinical programs involving new drugs for the treatment of chronic viral hepatitis B, D, and C, metabolic-associated steatohepatitis with advanced fibrosis, primary biliary cholangitis, alcoholic liver disease, and liver cirrhosis. She is a member of international teams of leading specialists in hepatology and actively contributes to the development of new treatment methods. She has twice been awarded the "Researcher of the Year" award at Tokuda Hospital.

The scientific work of Dr. Rozalina Balabanska is devoted to current issues in modern gastroenterology and hepatology. Of significant clinical importance are the results of Dr. Balabanska's work, dedicated to one of the most common socially significant diseases, namely liver steatosis. The candidate is a pioneer in introducing non-invasive methods and transient elastography for assessing the severity of liver steatosis in Bulgaria and has made an undeniable contribution to their establishment in the country. The results of these studies are part of Dr. Balabanska's research in her dissertation. They are original for our country and have contributed to the adoption of new guidelines here for assessing the severity of liver steatosis, particularly in patients with metabolic diseases.

In her habilitation work (monograph), Dr. Balabanska has conducted an in-depth analysis of liver steatosis, which has not been done in Bulgaria until now. The work analyzes the disease, its control, and the methods of modern diagnosis for the prevention of socially significant complications—liver cirrhosis and primary liver cancer—as well as the needs for liver

transplantation in these patients. This illustrates the author's extensive practical and clinical experience in this interesting and relatively new pathology.

Dr. Balabanska's scientific work is thorough. It enriches and expands our contemporary knowledge. Her significant contributions to medical science and practice stand out.

III. Teaching Activity

Dr. Rozalina Balabanska is an established lecturer. She participates in the training of medical students as a visiting lecturer in the Department of "Internal Medicine, Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacology, Pediatrics, Epidemiology, Infectious and Skin Diseases" at the Medical Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." The presented record shows that her total teaching load over the past four academic years was 1,152.50 hours, and she has been the scientific supervisor of six residents, four of whom are now certified specialists in Gastroenterology. Dr. Balabanska shares her knowledge and practical skills daily with residents and young doctors at the Gastroenterology Clinic of "Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda".

IV. Compliance with the requirements for holding the academic position of 'Associate Professor'

From the attached self-assessment report on the fulfillment of the minimum National indicators, it is evident that Dr. Rozalina Balabanska has a total of 10,453.09 points, which far exceeds the required 400 points.

V. Conclusion

Dr. Rozalina Balabanska is a colleague and friend with whom I have shared the last 31 years of my medical career, which is an honor and privilege for me. I believe that with her high professional qualification, extensive clinical experience, scientific contributions, significant achievements, and teaching skills, as well as her high ethical and moral standards in medicine, Dr. Rozalina Balabanska, MD, fully meets all the requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" as outlined in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at "Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda" EAD. I wholeheartedly give my positive evaluation and recommend that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury award Chief Assistant Dr. Rozalina Ivanova Balabanska, MD, the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty of "Gastroenterology."

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Sofia

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/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radin Tsonev, MD/
