

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Kiril Vasilev Draganov, D.Sc.

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Regarding: Competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and sports, direction 7.1. Medicine, in the scientific specialty "Oncology" for the needs of the Clinic of Medical Oncology, "Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda," published in State Gazette No. 12/11.02.2025.

General comments on the procedure

By Order No. 15-05-82/27.03.2025 of the Executive Director of "Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda" EAD, Dr. Venelina Mileva, and the hospital's procurator, Mr. Bugra Susam, and based on Art. 4, Para. 2, Art. 29a of the Higher Education Act, Art. 2, Para. 2 and 3, Art. 62, Para. 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Higher Education Act, Art. 67 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at "Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda" EAD, as well as based on the Decision of the Scientific Council (Protocol No. 57/26.03.2025), I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for the aforementioned competition.

At the first meeting of the jury, I was assigned to prepare an opinion.

The sole candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jeliasko Iliev Arabadjiev, M.D.

The documents submitted by Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev, the deadlines for conducting the competition, and the procedure, as well as the opinion I have prepared, fully comply with the aforementioned regulatory framework in force in the country.

Brief biographical data. Professional development.

Assoc. Prof. Jeliasko Arabadjiev, M.D., graduated from the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov," Varna, in 1997.

Between 2008 and 2014, he was a resident in "Medical Oncology" at SBALO EAD, Sofia, and from 2013, he also served as an assistant. In 2014, he acquired the specialty "Medical Oncology" and worked at the same institution until 2015 as a specialist and assistant. Since 2015, Dr. Arabadjiev has been part of the team at Acibadem City Clinic—until 2017 at the "Oncology Center Mladost," and from 2018 to the present at "Tokuda Hospital." Since June 2018, he has been the head of the department (now clinic).

In 2012, Assoc. Prof. J. Arabadjiev obtained the educational degree "Master" in the specialty "Health Management."

The continuous striving of the candidate in the current competition for professional development and improvement is evidenced by his participation in numerous postgraduate qualification courses and specializations. With the accumulation of experience and authority, he has also served as a trainer in recent forums: European School of Oncology, 7th Master

Class in Medical Oncology, Sofia, Bulgaria (2008); Management of Thyroid Cancer, Università di Pisa, Italy (2014); ESMO 1st Perceptorship Meeting on Clinical Trials, Budapest, Hungary (2014); Current Management of Breast Cancer, Institute Bordet, Brussels, Belgium (2014); ESMO Academy of Medical Oncology, Oxford, UK (2015); Perceptorship Meeting—Immunotherapy in Metastatic Melanoma, Tel Aviv, Israel (2018); European School of Oncology, Master Class Breast Cancer, Sofia, Bulgaria (2019); Master Class—Contemporary Treatment of Breast Cancer, ACC UMHAT Tokuda, Sofia (2019); "Drug Treatment of Breast Cancer," Sofia (2021); Founder and Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Annual Conference "IO365" of the Bulgarian Scientific Society for Immuno-Oncology (2020, 2021, 2023); Masterclass: Comprehensive Approach in Contemporary Treatment of Thoracic Tumors, Acibadem City Clinics UMHAT Tokuda (2023); Founder and lecturer at the summer school for young immunologists and oncologists "Scientorium Juvenorum"—BNSIO in collaboration with the Young Oncologist Club, Bansko (2023).

In 2020, Assoc. Prof. Jeli azko Arabadjiev obtained the academic degree "Doctor" in the specialty "Oncology" after successfully defending a dissertation on the topic: "Predictive and Prognostic Value of Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes in Women with Breast Cancer" as a self-prepared doctoral student at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov," Varna.

In March 2021, he was awarded the academic position of "Associate Professor" for the needs of the Department (now Clinic) of Medical Oncology, "ACC UMHAT Tokuda."

Scientific output. Research activity. Contributions.

In addition to the aforementioned dissertation, the candidate in this competition presents for review another 67 scientific works, which can be divided into 5 groups:

1. Participation in writing sections of scientific manuals and guides—4;
2. Scientific articles published in refereed and indexed journals—14, of which 10 are in journals with an Impact Factor (IF);
3. Scientific articles published in full text in peer-reviewed, non-refereed journals—24;
4. Scientific reports and presentations at international scientific forums—9;
5. Scientific reports and presentations at national scientific forums—16.

Regarding points 2 and 3 (full-text publications in journals), the candidate is the sole or first author in 26 (68.4%), second author in 6 (15.8%), and third or subsequent author in 6 (15.8%). In all 27 scientific reports and presentations at scientific forums, he is the first author and presenter.

The scientific output presented for review is of high value. Numerous significant oncological problems from various fields and areas have been investigated and analyzed, with corresponding conclusions and contributions in both theoretical and applied aspects.

The main directions in the research activity of Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev are as follows:

I. Breast Carcinoma

Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev's interest in this socially significant disease dates back to the beginning of his professional development as a clinical oncologist and has remained constant over the years. His dissertation is dedicated to this vast and current topic, examining the predictive and

prognostic value of tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes in women with breast cancer. (The dissertation was reviewed for the official defense procedure, so I have not subjected it to detailed analysis in this opinion.)

Publications No. 6 and 14 from the list of scientific output are dedicated to gene mutations in patients with metastatic breast cancer and their significance for determining treatment and prognosis.

Four of Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev's studies (No. 8, 27, 29, 33 from the list of scientific works) examine the results of applying different drug regimens for breast carcinoma.

Extremely interesting and important for practice are the analyses of cases of triple-negative breast cancer in our country (publications No. 11, 30 from the list of scientific works).

II. Lung Carcinoma

Although a case study, the case of a patient with concurrent idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) and lung adenocarcinoma is important for oncological practice and is presented based on a thorough literature review (No. 2, 7 from the list of scientific works).

Achieving better results and extending survival in patients with non-small cell lung cancer is based on a personalized approach, i.e., targeted treatment, biomarker testing for driver mutations, and the application of immune checkpoint inhibitors. Key determinants here are EGFR, ALK, ROS1, and KRAS12G mutations (No. 26 and 39 from the list of scientific works).

Immune-related toxicity, particularly specific gastroenterological manifestations when applying immune checkpoint inhibitors, has been studied and discussed in five of Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev's studies (No. 5, 15, 26, 32, 35, 39 from the list of scientific works).

III. Immuno-Oncology

Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev is part of a multicenter study presenting immunological, neurosurgical, and oncological aspects of glioblastoma multiforme. In a series of 15 cases, the role of mesenchymal stem cells and their potential transformation into cancer stem cells was investigated, as well as the application of photodynamic therapy to interrupt carcinogenesis (No. 3 from the list of scientific works).

Interesting and of great practical significance are the publications on the use of paraneoplastic autoantibodies in patients with unclear neurological symptoms, with the idea that they could be used for early diagnosis of malignant diseases (No. 3, 12 from the list of scientific works).

IV. Cutaneous Melanoma and Non-Melanoma Skin Tumors

This direction includes the candidate's studies on the use of new approaches in drug therapy for cutaneous melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma—targeted and immunotherapy (No. 10, 21, 23, and 37 from the list of scientific works).

V. Contemporary Treatment of Some Carcinomas of the Digestive and Urogenital Systems

Driven by Assoc. Prof. J. Arabadjiev's interests in the field of immuno-oncology, studies have been conducted on immune checkpoint inhibitors alone and in combination with chemotherapy for the treatment of hepatocellular carcinoma, esophageal and gastroesophageal junction carcinoma, pancreatic cancer, and other rarer locations in the digestive system (No. 19, 20, 22, 25, 31, 40, 41, 42, 43 from the list of scientific works), as well as for renal cell carcinoma and carcinomas of the bladder and prostate (No. 16, 17, 28, 36, 38 from the list of scientific works).

VI. Global Perspectives in Oncology and Care for Oncology Patients

Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev, in collaboration with numerous authoritative European clinical oncologists, presents European priorities in the field of cancer research (Heidelberg Manifesto for Cancer Research). The focus is on engaging society ("Engaging European society at the forefront of cancer research and care"). The "specific" problems in Bulgaria regarding screening, early diagnosis, and treatment have been discussed and analyzed, and based on this, recommendations for overcoming them have been formulated (No. 4 from the list of scientific works).

Publication No. 13 from the list of scientific works highlights the role of the clinical pharmacist in ensuring correct implementation and strict adherence to prescribed treatment.

VII. Innovations in the Education of Students, Residents, and Specialists and Popularization of Contemporary Approaches in Drug Treatment of Oncological Diseases

This direction includes Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev's participation in writing the "Compendium for Immunotherapy in Solid Malignant Tumors" (first and second, supplemented editions), "National Medical Standards for Systemic Drug Treatment, Evaluation of Treatment Effect, and Follow-up of Malignant Solid Tumors in Adults," "Management of Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma—Evidence-Based Clinical Guidelines" (No. 40-43 from the list of scientific works).

Citations. Impact Factor

The total impact factor of Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev is 21.3 (Reference from CML, MU—Sofia, Ref. No. 328/21.03.2025).

From the citation reference provided by CML of MU—Sofia (Ref. No. 331/21.03.2025), a total of 163 citations have been documented in databases, of which 52 are in foreign sources (Scopus) and 49 in Web of Science. Additionally, 62 citations have been found in sources from the CML library fund.

The high IF and large number of citations are a logical result of scientific output of high value and significance.

Participation in Scientific Projects

Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev has participated in two international (1, 2) and two national (3, 4) projects:

1. MDT Aid Program in Lung Cancer, where he is the main coordinator for Bulgaria, with the participation of over 40 countries from Europe, as well as the USA and China.

2. INTERACT EUROPE100 of the European Cancer Organization, funded by the European Commission—involving the top 100 oncology centers in Europe for training in oncology, where he is a participant.
3. "Study of Autoantibodies Potentially Associated with Immune-Related Adverse Drug Reactions in Patients with Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer Treated with Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors" at MU-Sofia, which started in 2024 for a period of 12 months.
4. "Study of PIK3CA Mutations in Bulgaria and Scientific Survey," completed in 2019.

Memberships in Organizations and Associations

Assoc. Prof. Jeliazgo Arabadjiev, M.D., is a member of numerous national and international unions, societies, organizations, and associations: Expert Board in Medical Oncology under the Minister of Health of the Republic of Bulgaria; Board of the Cancer Mission, European Commission; Joint Clinical Assessment Subgroup under the Directorate of Health and Food Safety, European Commission; Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Initiative for Breast Cancer and Colorectal Cancer (EIBC&EICRC) under the European Commission; European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO); American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO); American Association for Clinical Research (AACR); General Medical Council (GMC) in the United Kingdom, Specialists Registrar; BLS; Bulgarian Association for Clinical Trials, etc. He is also one of the founders and a member of the Board of Directors of the Oncology Training Academy (OTA), as well as Deputy Chairman of the "Young Oncologist Club." At the same time, Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev chairs the Bulgarian Scientific Society for Immuno-Oncology and the Institute for Breast Cancer Treatment Research. He is the Chairman of the State Examination Committee for the specialty "Medical Oncology."

All this is convincing evidence of the great authority he enjoys among the guild—both in Bulgaria and abroad.

Participation in Editorial Boards and Expert Councils

Further evidence of Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev's qualities as a specialist and scholar, as well as the authority and respect he has earned over the years, are his participations and memberships in the editorial boards of numerous Bulgarian and foreign journals (PRO Medic, GP Medic, MedInfo, Medical News, Health Navigator, European Medical Journal, Oncostar), as well as in expert boards (Expert Board for the specialty "Medical Oncology" under the Minister of Health, Expert Board under MOH). He is the national representative in ESMO.

Teaching Activity

A reference issued by the Faculty of Medicine at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" dated 17.03.2025 certifies Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev's total teaching load of 252 academic hours for the academic years 2021/2022, 2022/2023, 2023/2024, and the winter semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. These hours were completed as a part-time lecturer at the Department of "Internal Diseases, Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacology, Pediatrics, Epidemiology, Infectious and Skin Diseases."

According to a Certificate (Ref. No. 19-123/18.02.2025, issued by "ACC UMHAT Tokuda"), Assoc. Prof. Arabadjiev has completed a total teaching load of 1447 equivalent hours for the period 01.01.2020—31.12.2024.

The teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. J. Arabadjiev, M.D., includes training residents in oncology, leading courses and individual training for physicians in medical oncology, teaching students in the propaedeutics of internal diseases, as well as training physicians and residents in clinical trials.

He is the scientific supervisor of two self-prepared doctoral students, one of whom has already successfully defended a dissertation for the academic degree "Doctor."

CONCLUSION

Based on the presented evidence of the overall research activity, achieved results, scientific contributions, and teaching load, I consider that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Iliev Arabadjiev, M.D., is fully established as a specialist, scholar, and educator.

The attestation report for meeting the national requirements for the academic position of "Professor" under Art. 26 of the Higher Education Act proves that the total sum of 1795.01 points from all scientometric indicators of the candidate far exceeds the minimum criteria of 550 points.

The scientific output is original, and no evidence of plagiarism has been found.

For all the above reasons, I recommend that the members of the esteemed scientific jury vote positively for awarding Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jeliazko Iliev Arabadjiev, M.D., the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Oncology" for the needs of the Clinic of Medical Oncology, ACC UMHAT Tokuda, for which I confidently cast my positive vote.

Prepared the opinion:
/Prof. Dr. Kiril Draganov, D.Sc./

30.04.2025