

STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Kiril Vasilev Draganov, MD, Ph.D, DSc
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Regarding: Competition for the academic position of "Professor" in higher education area: 7. Healthcare and sports, Sector 7.1. Medicine, Scientific specialty: "Gastroenterology" for the needs of Gastroenterology Clinic at Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital, announced in SG at 12/11.02.2025.

Commentary and brief notes on the procedure

By order No. 15-05-83/27.03.2025 of the Executive Director of Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital Dr. Venelina Mileva and the procurator of the hospital Mr. Bugra Susam and on the basis of Art. 4, para. 2, Art. 29a of the Academic Staff Development Act, Art. 2, para. 2 and para. 3, Art. 62, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB, Art. 67 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital, as well as on the basis of the Decision of the Scientific Council (Minutes No. 57/26.03.2025) I am appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for the above-mentioned competition.

At the first meeting of the jury, I was assigned to prepare a statement.

The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Petko Ivanov Karagyozev, MD, FASGE. The documents presented by Assoc. Prof. P. Karagyozev, MD, the deadlines for conducting the competition and the procedure for it, as well as the statement prepared by me are fully in accordance with the above-mentioned regulatory framework applicable in the country.

Professional and biographical data. Postgraduate qualifications.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petko Ivanov Karagyozev, MD, FASGE graduated from the Medical University - Sofia in 2004. From 2006 to 2011 he was a resident at the Clinic of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at the Military Medical Academy, Sofia, and from 2011 to the present, he is been part of the team of the Clinic of Gastroenterology (CG) of Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital. He obtained his specialty "Gastroenterology" in 2013.

The professional path of the candidate in this competition is accompanied by an extremely intensive career development in every respect - as a specialist, scientist and researcher, teacher and administrator. From 2015 to 2017 he is the Interventional Gastroenterology Sector Head, after 2017 – Head of the Department of Interventional Gastroenterology, and since October 2022 he has been the Head of the CG at Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital.

In 2017 Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev was enrolled as a doctoral student in independent training with the topic "The Role of Cholangiopancreatography in the Diagnostics and Treatment of Pancreaticobiliary Diseases", and after a successful public defense on 25.02.2020, he acquired the Scientific Degree 'PhD' in the scientific specialty "Internal Medicine". In February 2022 he was awarded the academic position of "Associate Professor" for the needs of CG at Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital.

In 2016 Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev graduated from the specialty "Public Health and Health Management" at MU-Plovdiv, acquiring the educational degree "Master".

The candidate's continuous striving for professional development and improvement is proven by his participation in numerous postgraduate qualification courses and specializations, the majority of which are in leading and renowned world centers: "Shonan Kamakura" - Okamoto, Kanagawa, Japan; "Elizabethinen" - Linz, Austria; University Hospitals in Stuttgart, Hamburg and Dresden, Germany; Rome, Italy; Jablonec, Czech Republic; Shaare Zedek Medical Center - Jerusalem, Israel; AMC, Amsterdam, Netherlands, etc.

Assoc. Prof. Petko Karagyozev, MD, FASGE possesses an extremely high professional qualification, as evidenced by both the indicated specializations and the acquired certificates in "Interventional Gastrointestinal Endoscopy with Biopsy Level III", "Conventional Ultrasound", "Abdominal Doppler Ultrasound", "Interventional and Endoscopic Abdominal Ultrasound", "ERCP and Related Interventional Endoscopic Procedures - Level III".

The candidate enjoys an extremely high reputation both in Bulgaria and abroad, that is confirmed by the numerous memberships in prestigious organizations, unions and associations: member of the European Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ESGE); Privileged Member of ASGE (Fellow of the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy-FASGE since February 2021); member of the Bulgarian Scientific Society of Gastroenterology and member of the Board of Directors of this society (since 2018). Member of the European Cholangioscopy Study Group (ECG); member of the European Endoscopic Ultrasound Group (EGEUS); Representative of the BDGE at the UEG Meeting Of Members (since April 2021).

Since 2024 Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev has been a member of the examination committee for conducting the State Examination for acquiring a specialty in Gastroenterology. He participates in editorial boards and is a reviewer in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (GIE), Therapeutic Advances in Gastroenterology, World Journal of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, UEGW

Scientific output. IMPACT-factor. Citations

For his participation in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev presents a list of 90 scientific papers that have been printed and can be grouped as follows:

1. Dissertation for the acquisition of the Scientific Degree 'PhD' with a dissertation abstract - 1;
2. Full-text publications in refereed publications in English - 11;
3. Full-text publications in refereed publications in Bulgarian - 1;
4. Full-text publications in non-refereed publications in English - 1;
5. Full-text publications in non-refereed publications in Bulgarian - 49, including co-authorship in four textbooks;
6. Abstracts of reports presented at international scientific forums, printed in English in refereed publications with IF - 28.

In the indicated scientific production, Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev is an independent author in 4 (4.49%), first author - in 25 (28.09%), second - in 35 (39.33%), third and subsequent author in 26 (28.09%).

The total IF of the publications in which the candidate's works have been published is 345.9, and his individual IF is 70.085 (certified by Official Note with issue No. 161/ 20.02.2025, issued by the Central Library of Medicine, Medical University - Sofia).

According to another reference from the Central Library of Medicine, Medical University - Sofia (issue No. 160/20.02.2025) the publications of Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev have been cited a total of 222 times (97 in Scopus and 125 in Web of Science) with h-index = 6.

The high IF, as well as the very large number of citations, and by renowned, authoritative and globally recognized research teams, is convincing evidence of the exceptional scientific value of the scientific production submitted for review.

Main areas of research activity and contributions

The thematic areas studied and discussed in the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Petko Karagyozev, MD, FASGE, are diverse, the result of in-depth and dedicated work. The candidate's contributions are both theoretical and practical and applied in nature. In a more abbreviated form, I will emphasize the main ones, which are discussed in the following four main areas:

1. Digital peroral cholangiopancreatography dpocps (DPOCPS)

This is one of the main areas of research activity of Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev, with a number of undeniable contributions to the diagnostics and treatment of biliopancreatic diseases. The candidate is a pioneer of DPOCPS in the country and almost all contributions in this area are of an innovative nature, a number of them of international importance, and not only "confirmatory", as we are used to classifying most of the Bulgarian studies.

The dissertation for the acquisition of the Scientific Degree 'PhD' (scientific paper No. 1 on the list) is a thorough retrospective analysis of 186 patients with 208 procedures (reviewed during the official defense).

Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev in co-authorship with 11 experts from the "European Cholangioscopy Study Group" published a systematic and meta-analysis in "Endoscopy", summarizing 25 articles. The role of pancreatoscopy in the diagnosis of IPMN has been determined. The most common endoscopic features of this nosology are defined, as well as the criteria for invasiveness. The accuracy of the method was 88-100%, as well as its ability to change the surgical strategy in 13-62% of cases. (scientific paper No. 4 from the list). Cholangioscopically guided laser or hydraulic lithotripsy is a highly effective and relatively safe method, which is the subject of a retrospective study from two reference centers - the candidate's institution and the National Hepatology and Tropical Medicine Research Institute, Cairo, Egypt (scientific paper No. 7 from the list).

DPOCPS is a highly informative diagnostic method for unspecified biliary strictures. In his own series of more than 200 patients the main advantage of the method is proven - the possibility for sample taking under direct visual control. The technique is described in detail, as well as its other advantages and disadvantages (publication No. 60 of the list). Also in this aspect

and in his capacity as an expert and representative of the European Cholangioscopy Study Group, Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev participated in a prospective multicenter study analyzing different techniques for taking a biopsy under direct visual control using a mini-forceps of a new design. No difference in diagnostic accuracy was found between the so-called "single bite" biopsy and "bite-on-bite-on-bite" biopsy. The material was presented as a poster at the ESGE Annual Congress in 2024 and was sent for publication in Endoscopy (publication No. 78 of the list of scientific papers).

Also included in the DPOCPS rubric is the study of Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev with series of 120 cases of cholangioscopic extraction of proximally migrated biliary stones (scientific paper No. 54 from the list).

An interesting, although casuistic, case is a patient with an ectopic pancreas and isolated cystic dilatation of the intrahepatic bile ducts in the left lobe. It was diagnosed with direct cholangioscopy and electrohydraulic lithotripsy of intrahepatic stones, fragmentation and extraction, after which a left hepatic lobectomy was performed (scientific paper No. 3 from the list).

2. Biliary drainage techniques

Here, like in DPOCPS, are included studies of methodologies application different than the "standard and routine" ERCP and performed for the first time in our country, with the impressive series of more than 100 patients. It is about the different techniques of echo-endoscopic biliary drainage (EchoEBD). The majority of these studies, their results and conclusions have been presented at prestigious European and North American scientific forums, as well as published in reputable journals with high IF.

Proof of Assoc. Prof. Karagyozev's reputation is the invitation for a review article on EchoEBD, published in the World Journal of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (scientific paper No. 2 on the list). The methodology was also presented at the XVIII National Congress of Surgery with data from the first 100 cases (scientific paper No. 27 on the list).

The different minimally invasive drainage strategies in malignant distal biliary obstruction with a discussion of their advantages and disadvantages are the subject of another review article (scientific paper No. 49 from the list), as well as printed abstracts of reports and posters from international scientific forums - UEGW (2022) and ESGE DAYS Dublin (2023) (scientific papers No. 60 and 70 from the list).

Comparative analyses between echo-endoscopic anastomoses (hepaticogastral and choledochoduodenal) were presented at ESGE DAYS 2024, UEGWEEK 2024, DDW 2024 (Washington) and published as a review article "Bulgarian Hepatogastroenterology" (scientific papers No. 47, 77, 78, 81, 82, 85 of the list).

Important from a purely theoretical and practical point of view is the collaborative study comparing EchoEBD and ERCP preceding radical surgery. EchoEBD does not worsen the results and even demonstrates certain advantages over ERCP (scientific papers No. 5 and 59 of the list).

3. Contributions to other interventional endoscopy areas

Assoc. Prof. Karagyzov's commitment to innovative interventional techniques is proved by the publications and presentations on the first-ever performed in our country and introduced by him echoendoscopic pancreatico-gastrostomy (scientific paper No. 72 from the list), echoendoscopic gastro-enteroanastomosis (scientific papers No. 36, 52, 54, 71 from the list), endoscopic hepatic ultrasound (endohepatology) (scientific paper No. 37, 53, 84).

The concept of one-stage endoscopic ultrasound with biopsy, followed by ERCP in malignant distal biliary obstruction is the topic of scientific papers No. 6 and 69 from the list.

This area includes also studies on a number of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures routinely performed in a relatively small number of centers with a high volume of activity: iatrogenic lesions of the bile ducts (scientific papers No. 23 and 64 from the list); echoendoscopic-navigated procedures - fine-needle biopsy (scientific papers No. 62, 63, 68 from the list) and radiofrequency ablation of pancreatic NETs (scientific papers No. 9, 34, 39, 75, 83, from the list); endobiliary radiofrequency ablation under ERCP control in perihilar and distal cholangiocarcinoma (scientific papers No. 22, 73, 76, 86 from the list), endoscopic treatment of peripancreatic collections (WOPN) (scientific papers No. 24 and 27 from the list), etc.

A part of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Petko Karagyzov, MD deals with "more common" interventional gastroenterological activities such as percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (scientific paper No. 25 from the list), endoscopic resection of early neoplasms of the upper and lower GIT (scientific papers No. 13, 40, 41, 50, 55, 66 from the list), endoscopic papillectomy (scientific paper No. 51 from the list), endoscopic treatment of perforations and fistulas (scientific papers No. 57 and 65 from the list). However, these activities also rely on serious theoretical preparation and extensive practical experience

4. Applied in the real clinical practice and didactic contributions

First of all, I would like to mention the co-authorship of Assoc. Prof. Karagyzov, MD in four multidisciplinary clinical manuals (ed. Kalev D.), defining the behavior of carcinomas of the esophagus and gastroesophageal junction, gastric carcinoma, pancreatic carcinoma and cholangiocarcinomas (scientific papers No. 87, 88, 89, 90 from the list).

The candidate has co-authorship and independent publications on cystic tumors of the pancreas (scientific papers No. 35, 45, 74, from the list), actual guidelines for the prevention and treatment of acute post-ERCP pancreatitis (scientific paper No. 18 from the list), screening for certain carcinomas in the relevant risk groups (scientific papers No. 15, 20, 21, 43 from the list), the role of artificial intelligence in colonoscopy (scientific papers No. 42, 44, 46 from the list), gastroesophageal reflux disease (scientific paper No. 48).

Joint publications with teams from the Clinic of Hepatobiliary, Pancreatic and General Surgery and the Clinic of Thoracic Surgery emphasize the role of the gastroenterologist-endoscopist in the multidisciplinary approach in the treatment of a number of diseases (esophageal leiomyomas, duplication cysts and epiphrenic diverticula) and postoperative complications (e.g. after robot-

assisted esophageal resections with esophago-gastroplasty, distal pancreatomas, etc.) (scientific papers No. 13, 29-32, 56-58 from the list).

Educational activity

A certificate from the Medical Faculty at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" dated 17.03.2025 certifies a total teaching load of 739 academic hours, realized by Assoc. Prof. Petko Karagyozev, MD for the academic years 2022/2023, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

According to a certificate issued by Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda University General Hospital (issue number 19-122/ 18.02.2025) the candidate has realized a total teaching load of 1415 equiv. hours from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2024 with postgraduate students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the diverse and purposeful diagnostic-therapeutic, scientific-research and teaching activities, my comprehensive assessment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petko Ivanov Karagyozev, MD, FASGE is that he is fully developed as a doctor, scientist and teacher. He is distinguished by incredible work capacity and energy. He is extremely responsible towards patients and staff.

A certificate for meeting the minimum national requirements shows a total of 4638.16 that pretty much exceeds the established criteria.

Reviewing the submitted evidence I did not find any repetitions or plagiarism according to the established procedure.

Regarding the above mentioned, I am recommending the esteemed scientific jury to award Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petko Ivanov Karagyozev, MD, FASGE the academic title of "Professor" for the relevant position, for which I confidently vote "YES".

Statement author:

/ Prof. Dr. Kiril Vasilev Draganov, MD, Ph.D, DSc /

30.04.2025