

ACADEMIC OPINION

by Associate Professor Veselin Georgiev Popov, MD, PhD

Regarding: procedure for the academic position of “ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR” in the field of Higher Education Area 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional Field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty “Oncology”, for the needs of the Clinic of Medical Oncology at Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD

Information on the competition procedure

The competition for appointment to the academic position of “Associate Professor” in Professional Field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty Oncology, for the needs of the Clinic of Medical Oncology at Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD, was announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 35 of 14 April 2026.

By Order No. 15-03-141#2/12 June 2026 of the Executive Director and the Procurator of the medical institution, I was appointed as a member of the Academic Jury and, in accordance with the decision adopted at its first remote meeting, I hereby present this opinion.

There is **one candidate participating in the competition - Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova, MD, PhD**. Having reviewed the submitted documents, I consider them to have been compiled in compliance with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the internal rules of Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD. No evidence of breaches of academic ethics or plagiarism was identified in the submitted materials and accompanying reports.

Professional development of the candidate

The professional development of Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova demonstrates the consistent advancement of a modern university lecturer and medical oncologist who successfully combines clinical practice with research and teaching activities.

After graduating in Medicine in 2001, the candidate subsequently acquired specialist qualifications in Internal Medicine and Medical Oncology, providing a solid foundation for her further professional development. In 2024, she successfully defended a doctoral dissertation devoted to the role of systemic inflammation markers in patients with metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer and was awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD).

Since 2012, **Dr Tanya Zlatanova** has been working at the Department of Medical Oncology of **Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD**, where she has established

herself as a specialist with a focused interest in the treatment of thoracic malignancies, immuno-oncology, and personalized systemic therapy. In 2025, following a competitive selection procedure, she was appointed **Senior Assistant Professor**, while continuing to combine her clinical responsibilities with active involvement in the education and training of medical students and residents.

Particularly noteworthy, in my opinion, is the candidate's purposeful international professional development. Her participation in educational programmes organized by the **European School of Oncology (ESO)**, the **European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO)**, **CECOG**, and the **European Cancer Organisation (ECO)**, including the **ESCO Fellowship** and **INTERACT-EUROPE100** programmes, demonstrates her continuous commitment to professional excellence and successful integration into the European academic community.

This international experience is not merely a formal element of the candidate's curriculum vitae. It is clearly reflected in her scientific publications, clinical practice, and teaching activities. In my view, this is a particularly valuable quality in the assessment of a candidate for the academic position of **Associate Professor**.

Overall Assessment of the Scientific Output

The scientific work of **Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova** is characterized by consistency, a clear thematic focus, and practical relevance. The submitted scientific portfolio comprises **36 scholarly works**, including **one doctoral dissertation, one monograph, and 34 scientific publications** published in both international peer-reviewed journals and Bulgarian scientific journals. Some of these publications have appeared in journals with an **Impact Factor**, while the cumulative Impact Factor of the publications reaches **35.4**.

Particularly impressive is the high proportion of publications in which the candidate is either the **first author or the sole author (58.39%)**. This clearly demonstrates her leading role in the development of scientific concepts, study design, and the analysis and interpretation of research findings.

Her scientific activity is further complemented by participation in national and international scientific meetings, international educational projects, and clinical trials. Of particular importance are her participation in the **INTERACT-EUROPE100** project, as well as her role as **Principal Investigator and Sub-Investigator** in numerous international clinical studies.

With regard to the national scientometric criteria, the candidate not only fulfills but substantially exceeds the minimum requirements. She has presented **838.34 points**, compared with the **minimum required 400 points**, providing compelling evidence of sustained and highly productive scientific activity.

Assessment of the Scientific Contributions

The scientific interests of **Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova** are clearly focused on contemporary areas of medical oncology, encompassing immuno-oncology, the diagnosis and

treatment of lung cancer, inflammatory biomarkers, antibody–drug conjugates, personalized medicine, and the application of modern systemic therapies in a variety of solid tumours. This consistent thematic focus provides coherence to her scientific work and demonstrates the purposeful development of an independent research profile.

One of the candidate's most significant scientific contributions is her research on the role of **systemic inflammation as a prognostic and predictive factor in patients with metastatic non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)**. The studies derived from her doctoral dissertation extend well beyond the scope of a single clinical investigation and constitute a comprehensive research programme aimed at evaluating inflammatory indices such as the **Systemic Immune-Inflammation Index (SII)**, **Khorana Score**, **modified Khorana Score (mKS)**, and the **Advanced Lung Cancer Inflammation Index (ALI)**.

These studies demonstrate the potential of these readily available biomarkers for risk stratification, prediction of therapeutic response, and identification of patients with an unfavourable prognosis.

The presented analyses go beyond the statistical evaluation of clinical data by addressing both the opportunities and the limitations associated with implementing inflammatory biomarkers in routine clinical practice. This translational approach considerably enhances the scientific value and clinical relevance of the research.

A substantial part of the candidate's scientific work is devoted to **lung cancer**, a field that has undergone remarkable progress during the past decade owing to the introduction of immunotherapy, targeted therapies, and antibody–drug conjugates. Dr Zlatanova provides comprehensive analyses of current therapeutic strategies, demonstrating an excellent understanding of international treatment standards and a well-developed ability to critically interpret published scientific evidence. This is particularly important for the advancement of academic oncology, where research should directly contribute to the optimization of clinical practice.

Her review articles on **antibody–drug conjugates** and **personalized medicine** also deserve special recognition. These publications systematically summarize current knowledge regarding novel therapeutic approaches and provide comprehensive analyses of their mechanisms of action, clinical efficacy, and safety profiles. Such reviews possess not only scientific merit but also considerable educational value, supporting the continuing education of medical professionals.

It is also important to acknowledge the candidate's contribution through publications based on **real-world clinical practice**. The presentation of rare clinical cases and the analysis of therapeutic decision-making in patients with complex oncological diseases contribute to the exchange of practical experience and expand current knowledge regarding the management of uncommon clinical situations. Although case reports provide a lower level of scientific evidence, their educational value for the clinical oncology community is undeniable.

Another notable feature of the candidate's scientific output is its broad thematic scope. In addition to her principal research focus on **thoracic oncology**, Dr Zlatanova has published studies on **breast cancer**, **gastrointestinal malignancies**, and **gynaecological cancers**, demonstrating comprehensive expertise in the field of medical oncology and an ability to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to research and clinical practice.

Overall, the scientific contributions of **Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova** may be characterised as **original, relevant, and strongly practice-oriented**. They demonstrate her

ability to formulate scientific hypotheses, conduct independent clinical research, critically analyse research findings, and successfully integrate scientific evidence into everyday clinical practice. These are precisely the qualities I expect from a candidate for the academic position of **Associate Professor**.

Teaching Activities

Teaching constitutes an essential component of Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova's academic career and clearly demonstrates her ability to successfully combine scientific research and clinical practice with the education of future physicians and specialists in medical oncology.

Since **2019**, the candidate has served as a **part-time lecturer** at the **Faculty of Medicine, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**, where she has been involved in the teaching of medical students in the **English-language programme**. At the same time, she actively participates in the training of residents in Medical Oncology at the Department of Medical Oncology of **Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD**, where she also serves as a **supervisor of specialty training**.

The submitted documentation confirms a substantial teaching workload, amounting to **more than 1,900 teaching hours** dedicated to the education of undergraduate medical students and residents. This reflects not only a high level of teaching commitment but also sustained participation in the academic life of both the university and the hospital.

Particularly commendable is Dr Zlatanova's active participation as an invited speaker at **national and international scientific meetings**. Her lectures address the most rapidly evolving areas of medical oncology, including **immunotherapy, molecularly targeted therapy, antibody–drug conjugates, and personalized medicine**. Through these activities, trainees and healthcare professionals are provided with access to the latest scientific evidence and contemporary standards of cancer treatment.

Clinical, Diagnostic and Expert Activities

Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova's clinical practice is distinguished by a high level of professional competence and the consistent application of contemporary standards in the diagnosis and systemic treatment of solid tumours.

In her daily clinical practice as a **Medical Oncologist** at the Department of Medical Oncology of **Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD**, the candidate is actively involved in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with **lung cancer, breast cancer, gastrointestinal malignancies, gynaecological cancers, and other solid tumours**.

Particularly impressive is her expertise in the fields of **immunotherapy, targeted therapy, and the integration of molecular diagnostics into the selection of systemic treatment**.

Dr Tanya Zlatanova also actively participates in **multidisciplinary tumour board discussions**, which represent a cornerstone of the contemporary approach to cancer management. Working within a multidisciplinary team requires not only comprehensive knowledge of medical

oncology but also the ability to integrate information from different diagnostic and therapeutic disciplines in order to ensure the best possible care for each individual patient.

Her participation as both **Principal Investigator and Sub-Investigator** in numerous international clinical trials also deserves special recognition. This reflects the high level of professional trust placed in her and her ability to conduct clinical research in accordance with **International Good Clinical Practice (GCP)** standards. Through this work, the candidate contributes to providing Bulgarian patients with access to innovative treatment options while facilitating the implementation of modern therapeutic standards into routine clinical practice.

Dr Zlatanova's active involvement in professional organizations, scientific meetings, and international educational initiatives should likewise be acknowledged. Through these activities, she not only continuously improves her own professional qualifications but also contributes significantly to the dissemination and implementation of the latest advances in medical oncology in Bulgaria.

Based on the submitted documentation, I conclude that the candidate's **clinical, diagnostic, and expert activities fully satisfy the requirements expected of a habilitated academic staff member in the field of Medical Oncology.**

Conclusion

After a thorough evaluation of the submitted documents, scientific achievements, teaching activities, and professional development of **Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova**, I have reached the conclusion that she is a well-established medical oncologist with a clearly defined academic profile and considerable potential for further scientific advancement.

Her scientific publications are coherent in theme, highly relevant, and strongly practice-oriented. Particularly valuable are her contributions in the fields of **inflammatory biomarkers** and **immuno-oncology**, where the findings of her research have direct applicability to everyday clinical practice. Her international publication record, participation in European educational programmes and international clinical trials, together with her extensive teaching activity, further strengthen the profile of a candidate who successfully combines scientific research, clinical practice, and academic teaching.

Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova not only fulfills but, in many respects, **substantially exceeds the minimum national requirements** for appointment to the academic position of **Associate Professor**, presenting scientific work of proven quality, an active and sustained teaching record, and a significant contribution to the advancement of Medical Oncology.

Based on the above considerations, I express my unequivocally positive evaluation of the candidature of Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova, MD, PhD, and strongly recommend that the esteemed Academic Jury elect Dr Tanya Lyubomirova Zlatanova to the academic position of Associate Professor in Higher Education Area 7 – Healthcare and Sports, Professional Field 7.1 – Medicine, scientific specialty “Oncology”, for the needs of the Department of Medical Oncology at Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital Tokuda EAD.

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Plovdiv

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