

**To the Chair of the Scientific Jury,
appointed by Order No. 15-05-259 of 15.02.2025**

of the Executive Director and the Procurator of "Acibadem City Clinic UMBAL Tokuda"
Hospital

Your Protocol No. 61 / 26.11.2025

Enclosed, I submit: An opinion
regarding a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor"
in the scientific specialty "Cardiology"
announced for the needs of the Cardiology Clinic,
published in the State Gazette, issue 85 of 14.10.2025.

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OPINION

REGARDING A COMPETITION FOR THE ACADEMIC POSITION

“ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR”

I. Analysis of the candidate's career profile

Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova, MD, PhD, is an established specialist in the field of interventional cardiology, with substantial clinical and academic experience. Since 11 February 2013, she has been working at “Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda Hospital”, Sofia, Cardiology Clinic, as an interventional cardiologist. Her previous professional experience includes work at University Hospital for Emergency Medicine “Pirogov” (10/2009–02/2013) and the National Cardiology Hospital “St. Ekaterina”.

Dr. Zheleva-Kyuchukova holds certified specialties in “Internal Medicine” and “Cardiology”, as well as additional qualifications corresponding to the requirements for highly specialized clinical and academic activity.

In parallel with her clinical and research work, Dr. Zheleva-Kyuchukova actively participates in the academic training of residents and physicians. Since 2019, she has been a part-time lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, within the structure of Internal Medicine and related disciplines.

II. General description of the materials submitted for the competition

The candidate, Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova, MD, PhD, has submitted a complete set of documents in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework under the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the internal rules of “Acibadem City Clinic UMBAL Tokuda” EAD. The materials are comprehensive, well structured, and meet the requirements for participation in a competition for the academic position “associate professor” in cardiology.

I declare that I have no conflict of interest in relation to the candidate.

III. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific output

The scientific output of Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova, MD, PhD, submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position “associate professor” in

cardiology, demonstrates consistent, thematically focused, and clinically significant research activity, reflecting academic maturity and sustainable development in the field of interventional cardiology.

According to the author's report provided, the candidate participates in the competition with a total of 94 scientific works, including 1 dissertation thesis, 54 scientific publications, and 39 participations in scientific forums, completed after the defense of her doctoral dissertation.

The leading direction in the candidate's scientific works is related to percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) in patients with significant stenosis of the left main coronary artery, including in the presence of complex coronary pathology. This topic is also central to her dissertation thesis entitled: "Interventional treatment in patients with left main stenosis and concomitant complex coronary pathology", based on a prospective registry of patients with unprotected left main stenosis treated with PCI and implantation of second-generation drug-eluting stents.

The publications address current clinical issues with high practical value, including the selection of an interventional strategy in distal bifurcation left main lesions, optimization of technique and outcomes in complex anatomical settings, and analysis of predictors of adverse events.

A significant positive characteristic of the presented works is the registry-based and analytical approach, allowing follow-up of outcomes under real-world clinical practice conditions. The studies examine key angiographic and procedural characteristics and the application of different strategies in bifurcation lesions, demonstrating a high level of expertise and interventional competence.

Of particular importance is the analysis of patients with high anatomical complexity (SYNTAX score ≥ 32), where the candidate provides arguments for the feasibility of PCI with careful selection and an experienced interventional team, and identifies predictors of major adverse cardiovascular events, supporting clinical decision-making within the multidisciplinary Heart Team approach.

Some of the publications focus on pharmacological management after PCI, with emphasis on antithrombotic therapy and bleeding risk management, including in patients with high ischemic and hemorrhagic risk, advanced age, and concomitant atrial fibrillation.

In addition, the inclusion of topics such as contrast-induced nephropathy, rare neurological complications, and interdisciplinary work on radiation protection and dosimetry expands the thematic scope and highlights the candidate's orientation toward safety, quality, and modern standards in interventional cardiology.

The candidate has publications in journals indexed in Scopus/Web of Science, including those with an impact factor. The total impact factor is 60.483, and the individual impact factor is 22.7372. Citation data show a total of 31 citations, of which 7 are in Scopus/Web of Science, with a measurable h-index (Scopus – 2; Web of Science – 1).

Authorship contribution is substantial: in more than 75% of the publications, the candidate is a single, first, or second author (single/first author – 18; second author – 9), indicating a leading role in the planning and implementation of the studies.

The scientific output meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements for the academic position “associate professor”, with a total score of 805.27 points compared to the minimum required 400 points.

In summary, the scientific works of Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova have a clear thematic coherence, high practical applicability, and adequate scientific visibility. The studies are up-to-date, methodologically sound, and directly oriented toward optimizing interventional treatment in patients with complex coronary pathology, including high-risk groups. The presented scientific output supports the candidate's academic readiness to hold the position of “associate professor” in cardiology.

IV. Comprehensive qualitative assessment of teaching and educational activity

Dr. Zheleva-Kyuchukova is a part-time lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. She supervises and participates in the training of a substantial number of cardiology residents, as well as in the education of medical students. The submitted certificate of teaching workload indicates a significant volume of teaching activity—2,817 equivalent hours, more than half of which are dedicated to residents and early-career physicians.

V. Critical remarks and recommendations

I do not formulate critical remarks or recommendations.

VI. Overall assessment

The scientific activity of Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova is characterized by high productivity, originality, and sustainability over time. No evidence of plagiarism has been identified. My overall assessment of the candidate's personal qualities, scientific output, and teaching skills is high. The candidate significantly exceeds the minimum requirements for the academic position "associate professor" with regard to publications, citations, and teaching engagement.

VII. Conclusion

Based on the submitted documents and the analysis of the overall scientific and academic-teaching activity, I consider that Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova fully meets the mandatory and specific conditions and scientometric criteria for holding the academic position "associate professor".

VIII. Proposal

I propose that the Scientific Jury vote positively for awarding the academic position "associate professor" to Dr. Ivayla Zhivkova Zheleva-Kyuchukova.



18 January 2026

Plovdiv

Prof. Dr. Mariya Tokmakova, MD, PhD