

To the Chairman of the Scientific Review Committee, prof. Asen Dudov

determined by Order No. 11-07-75/28.05.2026 by Andrey Markov, Executive Director, and Mehmet Orkun Sarıbiyık, Procurator of Acibadem City Clinic University Hospital EAD, Sofia.

OPINION

By Professor Atanas Stefanov Yonkov, MD, PhD

Head of department “General and Operative Surgery”, Medical faculty of MU - Sofia

Concerning:

Procedure for Appointment to the Academic Position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty General Surgery, for the needs of the Department of Surgery at Acibadem City Clinic University Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment Ltd. (UMHAT), with Dr. Ivo Petrov Zhivkov, MD, PhD as the sole candidate.

This opinion has been prepared pursuant to Order No. 11-07-75/28.05.2026 issued by Andrey Markov, Manager of Acibadem City Clinic, and Mehmet Orkun Sarıbiyık, Procurator of Acibadem City Clinic, on the basis of Article 4, paragraph 2 and Article 25, paragraph 3 of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 57, paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act, Article 60, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Regulations governing the acquisition of scientific degrees and appointment to academic positions at Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Ltd., and a decision of the Scientific Council of Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Ltd., by which I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury.

This opinion has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations for Academic Staff Development at Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Ltd.

I declare that I have no conflict of interest in relation to this competition.

I found no omissions or irregularities in the competition documentation.

Brief Biographical Information

Dr. Zhivkov graduated from the Medical University of Sofia in 2010. In 2016, he obtained the specialty qualification in General Surgery and a Master's degree in Health Management at the Medical University of Sofia.

Between 2015 and 2017, he was a PhD student at the Department of General and Operative Surgery, Medical University – Pleven, where in 2017 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation entitled:

"The Place and Role of Laparoscopic Common Bile Duct Exploration in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Benign Extrahepatic Cholestasis."

He was awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD).

Dr. Zhivkov's professional interests include laparoscopic, minimally invasive and endoscopic surgery of the upper and lower gastrointestinal tract, laparoscopic liver surgery, laparoscopic hernia repair, bariatric surgery, hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), and component separation techniques. He has completed numerous postgraduate training courses and professional qualifications in Bulgaria and abroad in these fields.

Since April 2025, Dr. Zhivkov has served as Head of the Department at the Department of Surgery, Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Ltd.

Between October 2021 and April 2025, he was Deputy Head of the Department of Endoscopic and General Surgery at St. John the Baptist University Hospital, Sofia.

Since 2018, he has also served as a consultant in laparoscopic, endoscopic and minimally invasive surgery at Yugozapadna Hospital.

Previously, he worked as a consultant in laparoscopic surgery at Medica University Hospital in Ruse and MedLine Hospital in Plovdiv.

He is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association, the Bulgarian Surgical Society, the European Association for Endoscopic Surgery (EAES), and the European Society of Surgical Oncology (ESSO).

Scientific Activity

For participation in the competition, Dr. Zhivkov has submitted:

- one monograph entitled "Technical Aspects of Laparoscopic Common Bile Duct Exploration", awarded 100 points under Indicator B3;
- 41 original scientific publications published in Bulgarian and international journals and conference proceedings, distributed as follows:
 - sole author – 2;
 - first author – 17;
 - second author – 17;
 - third or subsequent author – 10;
- two published chapters in collective monographs.

These publications satisfy the minimum national requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.

Thirteen publications meeting the national minimum requirements are indexed in internationally recognized databases (Indicators B4.1–B4.13), yielding 178 points, exceeding the required minimum of 80 points for clinical disciplines.

An additional twenty-six publications appeared in peer-reviewed scientific journals (Indicators G8.1–G8.26), providing 264 points, above the mandatory minimum of 200 points for Indicators G5–G9.

Under Indicators D10–D12, the candidate reports nine citations, corresponding to 80 points.

Dr. Zhivkov has an individual Impact Factor of 38.416, calculated from thirteen publications.

His scientific interests encompass several major areas of general surgery, including laparoscopic and minimally invasive operative techniques, laparoscopic surgery for gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary malignancies, and innovations in minimally invasive surgery.

Scientific Contributions

In my opinion, Dr. Zhivkov's principal scientific contributions to contemporary surgery are closely related to his monograph "Technical Aspects of Laparoscopic Common Bile Duct Exploration" and to his broader scientific and professional work.

The monograph highlights two essential prerequisites for the successful practical application of laparoscopic hepatobiliary surgery:

- comprehensive knowledge of laparoscopic surgical anatomy; and
- mastery of both laparoscopic and conventional surgical techniques.

Of particular practical importance are Dr. Zhivkov's descriptions of techniques for intraoperative cholangiography, intraoperative ultrasonography, intraoperative cholangioscopy, and the use of catheters for bile duct exploration and dilatation.

The work also presents valuable scientific and practical contributions regarding the use of different catheter systems, irrigation techniques, Fogarty catheters, Dormia baskets, drainage techniques, surgical suturing when necessary, and procedures involving the papilla of Vater.

A further significant contribution to modern surgery is Dr. Zhivkov's work on laparoscopic lymphadenectomy for gastric carcinoma.

Within lower gastrointestinal surgery, Dr. Zhivkov has been among the pioneers in introducing transanal endoscopic microsurgery (TEM) for the treatment of early-stage (Stages I and II) rectal carcinoma.

Another important practical contribution is his implementation of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocols, promoting faster and more comprehensive postoperative recovery following abdominal surgical procedures, particularly biliary and bariatric surgery.

He has also contributed substantially to establishing laparoscopic surgery as the standard treatment for numerous benign conditions, including acute appendicitis, morbid obesity, achalasia, ventral, inguinal and hiatal hernias, cholelithiasis, rectal prolapse, and early-stage rectal carcinoma.

Teaching Activity

Between 2023 and 2025, Dr. Zhivkov served as a part-time lecturer in Surgery at the Medical College of the Medical University of Sofia.

He conducted practical classes, lectures, and examinations in the courses Surgery and Pre-Hospital Medical Care for students specializing in Radiologic Technology, Public Health Inspection, Medical Laboratory Science, and Rehabilitation.

His total teaching workload amounted to 352.42 academic hours, including:

- 130 hours of lectures;
- 165 hours of practical training; and
- 57.42 hours of examinations.

Conclusion

Dr. Ivo Petrov Zhivkov is an established and highly respected specialist in the field of General Surgery, as well as an accomplished scientist and educator with broad scientific interests and significant achievements.

In my opinion, his overall scientific, clinical, organizational, and teaching activities fully satisfy the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Ltd. governing appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.

Therefore, I will vote in favour of Dr. Ivo Petrov Zhivkov's appointment and respectfully recommend that the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury also vote positively for awarding him the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty General Surgery, for the Department of Surgery at Acibadem City Clinic University Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment Ltd.

14 July 2026

Sofia, Bulgaria

Respectfully submitted:

Prof. Atanas Stefanov Yonkov, MD, PhD

