

**TO
THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY,
APPOINTED BY ORDER No. RD-38-356/ 05/07/2024
OF THE RECTOR OF SOFIA UNIVERSITY**

S T A T E M E N T

by Prof. Dr. Maria Stoyanova Panchovska-Mocheva, Ph.D., M.H.M.
Medical University - Plovdiv

Subject: Competition for attaining the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty of Internal Diseases, higher education field 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine, for the needs of the Faculty of Medicine at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", promulgated in State Gazette, issue 37/ 26/04/2024

In implementation of the decisions of Protocol No. 1/ 16/07/2024 from the meeting of the Scientific Jury and in my capacity as a member of the same, I was assigned to present a statement on the selection for the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty of Internal Diseases. The statement was drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Two candidates are participating in the announced competition:

1. Dr. Rada Nikolaeva Gancheva, Ph.D., rheumatologist at "Sofiamed" UMHAT – Clinic of Rheumatology
2. Dr. Nonka Nikolova Yurukova, Ph.D., gastroenterologist at "Lozenets" UMHAT – Clinic of Gastroenterology

I have no conflict of interests as a member of the Scientific Jury.

Introduction of the candidate Dr. Rada Nikolaeva Gancheva

I. Professional activity and qualification:

Dr. Rada Gancheva graduated with a Master's degree in Medicine (Reg. No. 20298/16/12/2010) from Medical University - Sofia, Faculty of Medicine. In the period 2012 - 2015, she was a doctoral student at the Department of Internal Diseases, Clinic of Rheumatology, "St. Ivan Rilski" UMHAT. In 2014, she acquired a specialty in Rheumatology, and in 2017, she started working as a resident at the Clinic of Rheumatology, "St. Ivan Rilski" UMHAT. In 2021, she joined the Department of Rheumatology at Medical University - Sofia as a full-time Assistant Professor in Rheumatology, and since April 2022, she has been working as a part-time Assistant Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Specializations, certificates and courses:

1. Initial course in capillaroscopy, 2012.
1. MRI in SpA. International Rheumatology Imaging Workshop, London, 2013
2. Musculoskeletal Ultrasound course, 2017, Sofia, Bulgaria
3. Musculoskeletal Ultrasound in Rheumatological Practice, 2018, Plovdiv
4. Ultrasound of Joints with Practical Exercises, MU - Sofia, 2019
5. Sonoanatomy, Spain, 2019
6. Sixth International Musculoskeletal Ultrasound course, Greece, 2019
7. Musculoskeletal Ultrasound in Degenerative and Crystal Associated Rheumatic Diseases, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 2020
8. Ultrasound Diagnosis of Diseases of the Extracranial Cerebral Arteries, "Tokuda" UMHAT, 2023.
9. 4th EULAR Course on Synovial Biopsy, Spain, 2023.

Projects.

Dr. Rada Gancheva, Ph.D. is the lead investigator in two research projects from the Young Investigator competition on the topic of gout and a participant in three research projects from the 2020 and 2022 competitions related to progressive systemic sclerosis and systemic lupus erythematosus.

Scientific research activity.

Dr. Rada Gancheva acquired the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (Ph.D.) in the scientific specialty of Rheumatology in 2015 (Diploma No. 350) from Sofia University, after a successfully defended dissertation on the topic: "Gout and cardiovascular risk".

For participating in the current competition, the candidate Dr. Rada Gancheva has submitted a list of the following scientific works:

1. Dissertation: 1
2. Monograph: 1
3. Books and parts of books: 6
4. Publications:
 - A. In journals refereed and indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science databases
 - a/ in Bulgarian: 24
 - b/ in English: 21
 - B. In journals refereed in other databases: 2
 - C. Publications in non-refereed journals with scientific review:
 - a/ in Bulgarian: 11
 - b/ in English: 3.

Participation in scientific forums:

- A. Abstracts published in journals indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases
 - a/ from Bulgarian scientific forums: 12 and
 - b/ from international scientific forums: 14.
- B. Abstracts published in journals not indexed in databases:
 - a/ from Bulgarian scientific forums: 12
 - b/ from international scientific forums: 10

C. Participation in scientific forums without published abstracts:

a/ Bulgarian scientific forums: 10

b/ international scientific forums: 1.

The calculated total/individual IF is, as follows:

From publications: total/individual IF = 24.794 / 1.814, and from abstracts: total/individual IF = 149.329 / 30.274.

The scientific research activity of Dr. Rada Gancheva can be evaluated by the interest expressed by other authors and the enclosed citation reference prepared by the Central Medical Library, Medical University - Sofia.

The total number of citations is, as follows: 13 citations in Bulgarian literature sources; **70** citations in the Scopus and **93** in the Web of Science world-famous medical databases, and **12** in other freely available online literature sources.

The contributions of Dr. Rada Gancheva's scientific works can be systematized in the following directions:

1. Hyperuricemia, gout and cardiovascular risk.
2. Relationship of gout with obesity, diabetes and psoriasis.
3. Renal impairment in hyperuricemia, gout.
4. Chronic renal failure and cardiorenal syndrome.
5. Ankylosing spondylitis.
6. Systemic lupus erythematosus.
7. Progressive systemic sclerosis.
8. Rheumatoid arthritis.
9. Sjogren's syndrome.
10. Adverse drug reactions.
11. Case studies.

Contributions of a scientific original nature:

1. For the first time, a different methodological approach was used to search for a relationship between cardiovascular risk and clinical stages of gout. For the first time, a different design was used, reflecting a complex approach.

2. For the first time, a complex sonographic examination of patients with gout was performed and a correlation was sought between the changes in the kidneys, heart, vessels and joints.
3. For the first time, the cardiovascular risk in the development of tophi was assessed.
4. For the first time, vascular changes of an arteriolosclerosis type were identified as the leading changes in the presence of tophi.
5. For the first time, gouty tophi were found to be an independent strong cardiovascular risk factor in gout.

Contributions of a scientific and applied nature:

1. In the inter-acute period of gout, the serum levels of IL-1 β and IL-18 do not reflect the cardiovascular risk. However, chronic inflammation plays a leading role in atherosclerosis.
2. Morphological and immunofluorescent changes in patients with asymptomatic hyperuricemia and gout in the kidneys are associated with a chronic inflammatory process followed by fibrosis.
3. Asymptomatic hyperuricemia, regardless of intra-articular crystal deposits, determines a different cardiovascular risk.
4. For the first time, complex multinodal sonography was applied to evaluate heart failure.
5. The research on the resistive index of the common carotid arteries and the diastolic function of the left ventricle in the individual stages of gout has an original character.

Dr. Rada Gancheva is the first author of the National Consensus on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Gout. She is a co-author of the international consensus on Gout Hyperuricemia and Crystal-Associated Disease Network /G-CAN/, published in the Annals of the Rheumatic Disease in 2019, with IF = 16.102.

Dr. Rada Gancheva is a reviewer for the Rheumatology International journal (IF = 1.952 for 2017).

Of the 54 publications presented, she is the lead author in 27, the second author in 8, the third in 9, and the after author in the rest publications.

Dr. Rada Gancheva's H-index is 4 in the Scopus database.

Dr. Rada Gancheva is a member of the Bulgarian Society of Rheumatology, the Bulgarian Society of Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis and a member of the Gout Hyperuricemia and Crystal-Associated Disease Network.

Educational and teaching activity:

Dr. Rada Gancheva started her academic career in 2012 as a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Internal Diseases, Medical University - Sofia, based in the Clinic of Rheumatology. Her dissertation is on the topic: "Gout and cardiovascular risk". After successfully defending her dissertation, Dr. Rada Gancheva continues as an Assistant Professor in Rheumatology at the Department of Rheumatology, Medical University - Sofia, and subsequently, as a part-time Assistant Professor in Internal Diseases at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

As a full-time Assistant Professor in the Department of Rheumatology of the Faculty of Medicine, MU – Sofia, for the academic year 2020/2021, Dr. Rada Gancheva has a total of 262 hours from exercises in Bulgarian and English; and for the academic year 2021/2022, she has 258 hours from auditorium and exercises in Bulgarian and English, and 50 hours from postgraduate training.

As a part-time Assistant Professor in the Departments of Internal Diseases, Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacology, Pediatrics, Epidemiology, Infectious Skin Diseases at the Faculty of Medicine, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, the candidate has total auditorium occupancy of 117 hours for the 2022/2023 academic year, and 45 hours for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Introduction of the candidate Dr. Nonka Nikolova Yurukova

Professional activity and qualification:

Dr. Nonka Yurukova graduated from Medical University - Sofia, Faculty of Medicine in 1996. She acquired a specialty in Internal Diseases in 2003 and a specialty in Gastroenterology in 2007. She was awarded with the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (Ph.D.) in 2019. From 2010 to 2013, she was a part-time Assistant Professor – clinical tutor at “Lozenets” UMHAT, Faculty of

Medicine, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, and since 2013, she has been a full-time Assistant Professor at “Lozenets” UMHAT, Medical Faculty, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Dr. Yurukova started her professional career as a district therapist at the CVPO - Pernik and continued as a general practitioner in Pernik until 2003. Since 2003, she has been working as a resident at the Clinic of Gastroenterology, “Lozenets” UMHAT.

Specializations.

Dr. Nonka Yurukova has conducted the following courses and specializations:

1. 2005, University Medical Center, Amsterdam;
2. 2010, Conventional Ultrasound, first level;
3. 2011, Abdominal Doppler Ultrasound, second level;
4. 2022, Interventional and Endoscopic Ultrasound, third level;
5. November 2022 - March 2023, Masterclass in organ transplantation, credited with 12 EMC credits by the Romanian College of Physicians.

Projects.

Dr. Nonka Yurukova has provided information about her participation in an international project as a co-investigator.

Scientific research activity.

In 2019, Dr. Nonka Yurukova was awarded with the ESD of Doctor (Ph.D.) in Rheumatology, scientific specialty 7.1. Medicine /Cardiology/ with a dissertation on the topic: "Metabolic syndrome, non-alcoholic steatosis and cardiovascular complications - diagnosis and treatment".

To participate in this competition, the candidate has submitted a list of scientific works, as follows:

- 1/ Defended dissertation: 1.
- 2/ Articles in scientific journals preceding the defense of the dissertation: 9.
- 3/ Articles in scientific journals for the participation in the current competition: 13.
- 4/ Monographs: 2 (based on the defended dissertation, 2021 and 2022)
- 5/ Articles in conference proceedings: 2.

In accordance with the reference prepared by the Central Medical Library, Medical University-Sofia, the candidate Dr. Yurukova has the following citations: in Bulgarian sources from the library fund of the CML - **1**, in foreign sources (Scopus/Elsevier) - **50**, in the Web of Science - **36**, in other foreign freely available literature sources - **9**.

The scientific research activity of Dr. Yurukova can be evaluated by the interest expressed by other authors and the enclosed citation reference prepared by the Central Medical Library, Medical University – Sofia.

The contributions of Dr. Yurukova’s scientific works can be systematized in the following main directions:

1. Significance of the metabolic syndrome and non-alcoholic steatotic liver disease for cardiovascular diseases and complications. Development of a diagnostic behavior model in relation to their interrelationships.
2. Cardiovascular risk prediction using non-invasive assessment markers.
3. Development of mathematical models to estimate the outcome in adult liver transplantation and predictors of severe Covid-19.
4. Role of the T-cells in liver transplantation, compared in kidney versus liver recipients. Changes in the Th17, Treg subpopulations and soluble CD30 as additional markers to assess the immune status.
5. Works of a scientific and applied nature: Intestinal microbiome, irritable bowel syndrome and food intolerance. Changes in intestinal microbiome in immunosuppressed patients after liver transplantation.

Educational and teaching activity.

Dr. Nonka Yurukova has submitted a report on her academic workload for the period 2021-2024, as follows:

For the 2021/2022 academic year, she has total employment of 512.5 hours, of which 440 auditorium hours.

For the 2022/2023 academic year, her total employment is 470 hours, of which 470 auditorium hours.

For the 2023/2024 academic year (winter semester), she has total employment of 175 hours, of which 175 auditorium hours.

The indicators of the two candidates are presented in a tabular form, in accordance with the required minimum of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and its implementation, and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for attaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski":

Group of indicators	Contents	Associate Professor (minimum scores)	Dr. Gancheva's score	Dr. Yurukova's score
A	Indicator 1	50	50	50
B	Indicator 2	-	-	-
C	Indicator 3 or 4	100	131,7	100
D	Sum of indicators 5 to 9	200	516,7	239,8
E	Sum of indicators 10 to 12	50	1220	150
F	Sum of indicators 13 to 22	50	115	50
Total score:			2033,4	589,8

In summary:

On the basis of the presented evidentiary material and the references for the two candidates, both of whom meet the minimum requirements of the ADASRB, the Regulations for the implementation of the ADASRB and the Regulations for attaining the academic position of Associate Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", I rank the candidates, as follows:

- 11.1. Dr. Rada Nikolaeva Gancheva, Ph.D.
- 11.2. Dr. Nonka Nikolova Yurukova, Ph.D.

Dr. Rada Gancheva has a significantly greater general scientific activity, despite her shorter work experience compared to Dr. Nonka Yurukova. The candidate Dr. Rada Gancheva has been followings her academic path of development in the Department of Internal Diseases at MU-Sofia since 2012, and has successfully defended a dissertation with a multidisciplinary topic in internal diseases; her professional growth as a specialist-rheumatologist is in a medical specialty with systemic involvement due to the immune and autoimmune processes. Dr. Rada Gancheva has an

experience in training Bulgarian and English speaking students, as well as teaching experience in postgraduate courses.

Dr. Rada Gancheva is participating in the announced competition with a total IF of published scientific works of 24.794 (individual IF of 1.814) and a total IF of abstracts of 149.329 (individual IF of 30.274). Dr. Rada Gancheva's H-index is 4 in the Scopus database.

The scientific research and competencies of Dr. Rada Gancheva determine her participation as the lead author in the preparation of the National Consensus on Gout and as a co-author in the International Consensus on Gout. The candidate is a reviewer of foreign journals with IF. She participates as a lecturer in authoritative international scientific forums.

In conclusion:

I strongly recommend the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the election of Dr. Rada Nikolaeva Gancheva, Ph.D. to attain the academic position of Associate Professor in the higher education field 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine, scientific specialty of Internal Diseases for the needs of the Faculty of Medicine, Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski".

August 17, 2024

The statement was prepared by:

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