

Opinion

by Prof. Dr. Svetlana Atanassova Velizarova, PhD

SBALDB "Prof. Ivan Mitev" EOOD, external member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of associate professor in the field of higher education 7. 7.1. Medicine and scientific specialty "Paediatrics", ", announced in State Gazette No.: 90, dated 25.10.2024.

The documents for the abovementioned competition have been submitted by a single candidate - Dr. Denitza Roumenova Kofinova, PhD

The candidate Denitza Kofinova, PhD meets the basic requirements for the position of Associate Professor according to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADAB) and the Regulations of the University Hospital "N.I. Pirogov - Sofia for its application.

From 2016 to April 2023 she was successively a lecturer, assistant professor and chief assistant professor at the Department of Paediatrics, MU-Sofia. She teaches Bulgarian and English-speaking medical and dental students, pediatrics and pediatric gastroenterology graduate students and other pediatric subspecialties. She participates in courses organized by SDO in Pediatric Gastroenterology and Basic Course - Level I. From 24.03.2016- 24.03.2020 he is a full time PhD student at the Department of Paediatrics. In June 2020 she defended her thesis on 2D Shear wave elastography on "Assessment of fibrosis in children with chronic liver disease".

She is a member of the European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (ESPGHAN), the Bulgarian Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (BULSPGHAN), the Bulgarian Paediatric Association, the Bulgarian Association of Ultrasound in Medicine (BAUM), the Bulgarian Medical Association. She is a member of the Board of Directors of BAUM and Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the journal Diagnostic and Therapeutic Ultrasound.

She is certified in abdominal ultrasonography - level I and II, conventional gastrointestinal endoscopy. She has undergone a course in interventional gastrointestinal endoscopy to perform STRETTA.

In the current competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, 28 publications (27 full text articles and one published paper) have been submitted, of which 17 have been published in scientific journals refereed and indexed in WOS and Scopus and 11 in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals. Four of the publications are book chapters (published in edited collective volumes). Five publications (4 articles and 1 paper) have a Thomson Reuters impact factor (overall IF 9,572 - articles - 5,326, papers - 4,246). In the vast majority of publications submitted to the competition, the candidate is the first or last author - in 16 first

author and in one last author (refereed first author - 8 papers, non-refereed with scientific peer review first author - 8 papers).

An official citation reference from the Central Medical Library (CML) was submitted, according to which the applicant has 10 citations in publications refereed in SCOPUS (Elsevier) and 10 citations in Web of Science (Clarivate) and 23 citations in Bulgarian sources. Self-citations are excluded.

In the presented works scientific and applied results have been achieved and problems with contributions in the following areas and directions have been studied:

1. Non-invasive methods have the greatest diagnostic value in determining significant and advanced fibrosis.
2. SWE is a highly sensitive and highly specific method for the evaluation of significant and advanced liver fibrosis in childhood.
3. SWE can be used in the diagnosis of children with CLD.
4. SWE correlates strongly with histological fibrosis in pediatric patients with CLD, outperforming blood markers of fibrosis.
5. SWE is not influenced by gender, age and BMI.
6. SWE is most strongly influenced by direct and total bilirubin values, followed by ASAT and ALT.
7. FibroTest is a highly sensitive and highly specific method for the evaluation of significant and advanced liver fibrosis in childhood.
8. FibroTest can be used in the diagnosis of children with CLD.
9. FibroTest is superior to APRI and FIB-4.
10. APRI outperforms FIB-4 as a blood marker for determining significant and advanced fibrosis in children.
11. The ASAT/ALAT ratio cannot distinguish the presence of any fibrosis in children.

Thematic distribution of scientific works and contributions related to research and publication activity outside the dissertation topic

A. Paediatric inflammatory bowel diseases

Paediatric Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (PIBD) - Crohn's Disease (CD), Ulcerative Colitis (UC) and Nondeterminant Colitis, are immune-mediated conditions that develop in genetically predisposed individuals under the influence of certain environmental factors. They are socially significant diseases, with a relapsing-remitting course and debilitating character and a steadily increasing incidence.

B. Chronic liver diseases

Chronic liver diseases in childhood for an extremely heterogeneous group, whose diagnosis and staging until recently necessarily involved mandatory liver biopsy with histological interpretation. In adult patients with hepatitis C virus (HCV), ultrasonography with elastography as a marker of fibrosis replaced liver biopsy for the first time. For the first time in Bulgaria, Dr. Kofinova developed a cut-off value of two-dimensional shear-wave elastography (2D-SWE) for significant liver fibrosis (F2) in 53 children with chronic liver disease.

C. Helicobacter pylori infection

Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) infection is one of the most common chronic infections that cause gastroduodenitis, peptic ulcer disease, gastric carcinoma, and mucosa-associated lymphoma (MALT). In collaboration with microbiologists, 362 children were studied, 181 with a family history of gastric complaints and 181 without a family history. The incidence of H. pylori infection was significantly higher in the group of children with a family history of upper gastrointestinal complaints

D. General paediatric gastroenterological problems

Common general paediatric problems such as contemporary approach and recommendations for infant and young child feeding, constipation in infancy and the place of probiotics in paediatric gastroenterology are discussed. Issues that concern every general practitioner and paediatrician.

E. Multidisciplinary case studies

Exhibit C - 9 reports a multidisciplinary approach to the diagnosis and management of a 15-year-old girl with a congenital giant epidermoid cyst of the spleen, with complaints of epigastric heaviness and loss of appetite. Laparoscopic splenectomy was performed, which is challenging in childhood. There were no postoperative complications.

The candidate has competence and professional qualities. He definitely exceeds the required minimum number of points for holding the academic position of Associate Professor in the Regulations of the University Hospital "N.I. Pirogov" - Sofia (Table 1)

Table 1 Comparison between the required minimum number of points and the candidate's actual number of points for scientific production

Group Indicator	Content	Indicator group Content Required points according to the requirements of the UMHATEM "N.I. Pirogov" EAD – city Sofia	Dr. Kofinova, PhD
A	Indicator 1	50	50
B	Indicator 3 or 4	100	114
C	Indicator 5-9	250	273,54
D	Indicator 10-12	50	265
E	Indicator from 13 till the end	-	80
Общ сбор	Indicator A - E	450	782,54
F	IF (refers only to the requirements of the N.I. Pirogov University Hospital)	5	9,572

In conclusion, the summarized data from the submitted documents show that the scientific production of the candidate is more than sufficient to meet the minimum requirements regulated in the Law on the Research and Development of the University Hospital "N. Pirogov - Sofia. The results of the candidate's research work indicate, on the one hand, grouped and focused research and, on the other hand, new ideas with a clinical focus. Dr. Kofinova is a good teacher with active participation in the training of students and postgraduates. All this gives me a reason to give a positive assessment of the scientific and teaching activity and to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the academic position of "Associate Professor" to Dr. Denitza Kofinova in the field of Higher Education 7. Health and Sport, in the professional field 7.1. "Medicine", and scientific specialty "Paediatrics", for a place advertised at the Clinic of Paediatric Surgery, Primary Scientific Unit of "Paediatrics".

03.02.2025 г.

Member of the scientific jury

(Prof. Dr. Svetlana Atanasova Velizarova, PhD)