

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr Galya Krumova Tzolova, MD

regarding the competition for the academic post of 'Professor' in the field of higher education 7. "Healthcare and Sport", professional field 7.1 "Medicine", specialization "Social Medicine and Health Management", for the needs of the Cardiology Clinic at the Tsar Boris III National Multidisciplinary Transport Hospital, announced in the State Gazette, issue 15/06.02.2026.

One candidate is participating in the announced competition – Assoc. Prof. Dr Anelia Milkova Lukova, MD. The set of documents submitted complies with the regulatory requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations on the conditions and procedures for the award of academic degrees and the holding of academic posts at the Tsar Boris III National Multidisciplinary Transport Hospital.

Biographical and professional details

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anelia Milkova Lukova has demonstrated consistent and sustained professional development in the fields of medicine, psychiatry, neurology, toxicology, social medicine, and health management. She graduated with a medical degree in 1986 from the Medical University of Sofia. In 1990, she qualified as a specialist in neurology; in 1994, she qualified as a specialist in psychiatry; and in 2006, she obtained a Master's degree in Health Management from the Faculty of Public Health at the Medical University of Sofia.

In 2009, Assoc. Prof. Lukova defended her doctoral thesis on the topic 'Psychosocial aspects and prevention of alcohol poisoning in school-age children' and was awarded the academic and scientific degree of 'Doctor of Medicine' in the scientific specialty 'Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy'. Since 2012, she has held the academic post of "Associate Professor" in the same discipline.

Her professional career began at the District Hospital in Vidin, where she worked as a neurologist from 1986 to 1999. She then continued her professional career as a psychiatrist at the Department of Toxicology at the N.I. Pirogov University Hospital, where she currently works.

Her professional biography also includes specializations abroad – as a Tempus Program fellow in France, at the Katsarov Foundation in Lausanne, Switzerland, at the French Embassy in France, and at the Group for Combating Drug Use and Trafficking in Luxembourg. These specializations broaden her professional horizons and contribute to the international focus of some of her research and practical work.

Assessment of the candidate's scientific works in terms of overall academic development

For participation in this competition, the candidate has submitted 178 scientific works. This volume demonstrates long-standing and systematic research activity, which has developed steadily both before and after the acquisition of the academic position of 'associate professor'.

The works submitted include a published habilitation thesis – a monograph; a co-authored monograph following the acquisition of the academic position of 'associate professor'; two book chapters following the appointment as associate professor; one chapter from a textbook for students at the Faculty of Public Health at MU – Sofia following the appointment as associate professor;

publications in Bulgarian scientific journals, refereed and indexed in international databases; publications in Bulgarian non-refereed peer-reviewed journals; publications in foreign specialised indexed and non-indexed journals.

A particularly positive aspect to note is the candidate's activity following her habilitation as an associate professor. Since taking up the academic post of 'associate professor', she has produced 53 publications and participated in 48 scientific forums, 15 of which were abroad. Her research output since her habilitation accounts for 56% of her total research output.

The total number of participations in scientific forums is 80, of which 52 were at national and 28 at international forums. Since obtaining the academic rank of 'associate professor', she has participated in 48 events, including 33 at national and 15 at international forums. These figures demonstrate a strong presentation of her scientific results to the professional community and participation in academic exchange at both national and international levels.

It is also significant that Assoc. Prof. Lukova is the sole or first author in 58% of her scientific output. This demonstrates a clear personal contribution, a leading role in formulating research tasks, and active engagement in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of results.

Main areas of research and contributions

The candidate's scientific works can be categorized into several interrelated areas:

- *Clinical management and disease management*

Central to this area is the monograph 'Management of Mental Disorders in the Emergency Department' and related publications. These represent a synthesis of the candidate's theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the fields of mental health, emergency medicine and integrated healthcare. The monograph has methodological value as it examines the problems of mental disorders in emergency settings – an environment in which clinical decisions require rapid assessment, good organization, coordination between specialists, and clearly defined algorithms for action. The proposed comprehensive risk management measures for ensuring patient safety in an emergency hospital make a scientific and practical contribution. These are based on a functional approach and take into account the specific nature of the emergency setting, where mental disorders often overlap with somatic problems, intoxication, behavioral crises, and the need for multidisciplinary care. The developed integrated model for the prevention of alcohol dependence through team-based care also represents a significant contribution. This model is important because it goes beyond a one-dimensional clinical approach, emphasizing coordination, follow-up, prevention, and the integration of diverse professional competencies into the treatment and support process.

Of practical value are also the training module for postgraduate qualification of somatic care teams, the specialized organizational technologies developed for the management of mental disorders in the emergency department, and the implementation of a liaison psychiatry model, which has a direct bearing on the safety and quality of care.

- *Health of vulnerable population groups*

This area includes works devoted to addictions, suicidology, children and adolescents, elderly patients, and individuals at increased risk due to social, mental or health factors.

Assoc. Prof. Lukova analyses alcohol poisoning in children as a significant medical and public health problem. In her research, this problem is not viewed solely as an acute clinical condition, but as a phenomenon linked to the family environment, behavioral risks, social determinants, health culture, and the need for targeted prevention. Her works examine aspects of detoxification in hospital settings, as well as methods for identifying personality traits in individuals with alcohol dependence. Her studies on suicidal crises in children and adolescents deserve special attention. These emphasise the need for a mandatory interdisciplinary and team-based consultative approach. The candidate also presents a retrospective study of intentional self-poisoning in adults, utilising the methods of modern

epidemiology of non-communicable diseases. This approach is essential because adult patients, particularly those with chronic conditions, are often at increased risk of suicidal behaviour and require specific preventive and therapeutic strategies.

The proposed model of an intervention program for overcoming heroin dependence, as well as the algorithm for managing children following a suicide attempt, are practically applicable. These developments are aimed at improving physical and mental health, supporting family and social reintegration, and providing opportunities for counseling and therapeutic work in both outpatient care and emergency hospital settings. Another significant contribution is the first clinical-epidemiological study conducted in Bulgaria on suicide attempts involving corrosive poisons and the motivation for such behavior across different age groups.

▪ *Clinical Toxicology*

Publications in this field relate to acute intoxications, deliberate self-poisoning, drug poisoning, carbon monoxide poisoning, and diagnostic and therapeutic management in both outpatient and inpatient settings. The analysis of successful medical practices, which require timely diagnostic orientation and knowledge of therapeutic approaches, makes a scientific and theoretical contribution.

Some of the publications examine deliberate self-poisoning with sleeping pills and other substances. These studies justify the need for medical teams in outpatient and inpatient care to be well-informed regarding the use of psychotropic medications, potential risks, the clinical picture, and approaches to managing intoxication.

With regard to mental health, the candidate discusses the use of antipsychotics with a lower propensity for adverse effects and presents data from long-term studies on self-poisoning in patients with underlying mental disorders.

Of particular significance are the studies on carbon monoxide poisoning, which can occur during accidents, natural disasters, military conflicts and terrorist acts, and cause severe injuries requiring long-term follow-up care, as well as the proposed comprehensive model for diagnostic and therapeutic management of intoxications in both out-of-hospital and in-hospital medical care.

▪ *Public health and preventive programs for adolescents*

A theoretical contribution is provided by the conceptual framework developed for the psychosocial dimensions and possible interventions in cases of alcohol poisoning among young people. Within this framework, alcohol intoxication is examined in the context of health promotion, the family environment, the school environment, health culture, and behavioral determinants. The candidate analyses trends in alcohol intoxication among children in relation to various characteristics of the family environment. For the first time in Bulgaria, a systematic study of alcohol poisoning in children has been conducted, including the causes and circumstances of its occurrence.

Of practical significance is the developed model of a comprehensive program for active selective prevention of alcohol poisoning in children, which can be used when planning interventions in school and community settings.

Publications, citations and scientific recognition

Assoc. Prof. Lukova's scientific works have been published in a wide range of Bulgarian and international scientific journals, including those in the fields of emergency medicine, psychiatry, neurology, toxicology, public health, health policy, and management. Publication in journals of varying profiles is consistent with the interdisciplinary nature of her academic work.

The citations reported by the Central Medical Library at MU – Sofia and NACID demonstrate scientific recognition. The Scopus database shows 21 citations and an H-index of 3, whilst the Web of Knowledge shows 17 citations and an H-index of 3. The NACID report shows 32 citations from the Web of Science, Scopus, and other databases. Additionally, evidence of 5 citations in dissertations has been provided.

The total Impact Factor of the journals in which Assoc. Prof. Lukova's publications appear is 42.761, and the total SJR is 16.326. According to the report on the Impact Factor and Scimago Journal Rank of the journals in which articles citing Anelia Milkova Lukova's publications were found, the total IF is 30.039 and the SJR is 14.459. These indicators support the conclusion that the candidate's research output has visibility and resonance within the professional community.

Teaching and methodological activities

Since 2019, Assoc. Prof. Lukova has been an adjunct lecturer at the Yordanka Filaretova Medical College, part of the Medical University of Sofia, in the 'Rehabilitation' program, with a total teaching load of 270 hours, amounting to 115 hours over the last three years. The candidate delivered a series of lectures in a course for postgraduate trainees in emergency medicine between 2014 and 2016. In addition, she participates as a lecturer in a continuing education course for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals.

She is the academic supervisor of two PhD students undertaking independent research, one of whom defended their thesis in 2015.

His teaching and methodological work includes the monograph 'Management of Mental Disorders in the Emergency Hospital', which is of educational and methodological significance, as well as co-authorship of the teaching guide 'Global Population Health' published by the Faculty of Public Health at the Medical University of Sofia. She has also developed a five-lecture course for postgraduate trainees in emergency medicine and for students on the "Professional Bachelor's" degree program at the Yordanka Filaretova Medical College.

Between 2013 and 2016, Assoc. Prof. Lukova served as the research coordinator for the Specialised Therapeutic Complex at the N. I. Pirogov University Hospital.

Expert, editorial and organizational activities

Associate Professor Lukova served as an expert for the Open Society Foundation on the project 'Detoxification of Substance Abuse and Drug Addiction' between 2001 and 2002, and as a consultant for SOS Children's Villages in Bulgaria between 2003 and 2004. She was a member of the Scientific Council of the N.I. Pirogov University Hospital in 2013–2014, co-founded the Bulgarian Society of Emergency Medicine in 2014, and has served as a member of scientific panels.

Her editorial work includes serving as deputy editor-in-chief of the journal 'Emergency Medicine' from 2013 to 2019, as well as membership of the editorial board of the journal 'Transport Medicine' since 2024.

Compliance with minimum national requirements

The submitted report on the minimum national scientometric indicators exceeds the requirements for the academic position of 'professor'. With a minimum total requirement of 550 points, the candidate has 1734.86 points.

Group of indicators	Content	Minimum requirement for professor	Assoc. Prof. Lukova
A	Indicator 1	50	50
In	Indicators 3 or 4	100	100
G	Sum of indicators 5 to 9	200	934.86
D	Sum of indicators 10 to 12	100	505
E	Sum of indicators 13 to the end	100	145
Total		550	1734.86

Conclusion

Based on the materials submitted for the competition, the volume and quality of the academic output, the proven citation record, the teaching and educational-methodological activities, the expert experience and the significant exceeding of the minimum national requirements, I give a positive assessment of the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr Anelia Milkova Lukova, MD.

I consider that the candidate possesses the necessary professional, scientific, teaching and expert qualities to hold the academic post of 'professor'. Her work is in line with the profile of the advertised competition, and **her** contributions are relevant to the development of social medicine, health management, public health and prevention.

In view of the above, I strongly recommend that the distinguished academic jury support the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr Anelia Milkova Lukova, MD, and that **she** be awarded the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sport, professional field 7.1. Medicine, in the scientific speciality 'Social Medicine and Health Management', for the needs of the Cardiology Clinic at the Tsar Boris III National Multidisciplinary Transport Hospital.

28 May 2026

Assoc. Prof. Dr G. Tzolova, MD

