

Opinion

on the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor"

at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases

by Associate Professor Tonka Ivanova Varleva, MD, PhD

candidate for the position - Dr. Lili Emilova Rahamimova-Marinova, MD

The present position is issued pursuant to Order of the Director of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases No. 106 of April 7, 2026 for the appointment of a scientific jury to hold a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of Epidemiology of the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, and is in accordance with the decisions of the first meeting of this scientific jury. One candidate participated in the competition – Dr. Lili Emilova Rahamimova-Marinova, MD, Head of the Department of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases.

General information about the candidate

Dr. Lili Emilova Rahamimova-Marinova, MD was born in 1968. She graduated from the Medical University of Sofia in 1995 with excellent results. She began her professional experience as a resident physician at the National Multidisciplinary Transport Hospital in Sofia, and subsequently, from April 2001 - at the Department of Epidemiology and Surveillance of Infectious Diseases at the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases, successively as a research associate III - I degree and chief assistant.

She obtained the medical specialty "Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases" in 2006. After successfully defending her dissertation in 2012 on the topic: "Epidemiology of Measles in Bulgaria under the conditions of elimination and possibilities for effective surveillance", she also obtained the ONS "Doctor" in Epidemiology. In 2015, she was elected and appointed as an associate professor at the Department of Epidemiology and Surveillance of Infectious Diseases at the National Center for Epidemiology and Surveillance - Sofia, and since 2016 she has been the head of the department.

In the period from July 2016 to the end of 2025, she worked at the SRZI successively as a chief expert, chief inspector, head of the "ECZB" department and deputy director. After which she returned to the NCZPB, as head of the "Epidemiology and Surveillance of Communicable Diseases" department. She is fluent in English and Russian. She has excellent computer skills. She

has completed a number of specializations and trainings in the country and abroad. She is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association.

General description of the materials submitted for the competition

From the set of materials on paper and electronic media provided to me for my opinion, it is evident that the documentation is complete, clearly arranged, and that all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of this Act, as well as the adopted rules for holding academic positions at the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, have been met. The total number of publications in the entire scientific career of Dr. Marinova is 90, of which 43 are scientific articles published in full, 39 are reports and abstracts published in scientific publications, 1 is a manual for medical specialists published in co-authorship, 1 is an independent monograph and 6 are other articles published in non-scientific publications. The impact factor after acquiring the ONS "Doctor" is 9.945, and the total impact factor is 27.079. Out of a total of 236 citations of the scientific publications of Dr. Marinova (h-index=6, ResearchGate); (h-index=6, Google Scholar), 169 are citations after acquiring the ONS "Doctor".

The total number of participations in foreign and national forums in the entire professional career of Dr. Marinova is 90, of which after obtaining the ONS "Doctor" - 50. Dr. Marinova has 6 implementations and other scientific and applied developments, in 2 implementations she is the first scientist. She has participated and successfully implemented 15 international scientific and applied projects, as well as in 3 national programs, in 6 of which Dr. Marinova is the leader, and in the rest of them she is a participant as an expert in the various modules Analysis of scientific research activity

The following main scientific directions are highlighted in the described scientific works:

1. Study on the epidemiology of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). Surveillance of MMR. Elimination strategy for measles and rubella.

1.1. Measles. Main direction of the candidate's work. Part of the developments in this direction are related to the studies carried out in connection with her dissertation work, namely: Studies on the epidemiology of measles in Bulgaria during the elimination period; Study of the measles epidemic in Bulgaria in 2009-2010; Study on the nosocomial spread of measles in Bulgaria during the epidemic period, 2009-2010; Study on the epidemiological surveillance of measles in Bulgaria during the elimination period, 2005-2010; Development of an information system for collecting and analyzing data on measles incidence.

Another part of the developments in this area are related to:

- Additional studies, outside the dissertation, of the factors modeling the epidemic process, leading to the persistence of the circulation of the wild measles virus among the Bulgarian population and its local spread, despite the availability of a highly effective vaccine;
- Nosocomial spread of measles;
- Molecular biological studies of measles-positive patients during the elimination period in Bulgaria;
- Study on a complex of socio-economic factors as a cause of complications in measles patients in the period 2009-2010.
- Measles surveillance. Assessment of the effectiveness of the Information System for collecting and analyzing data on measles incidence (2011).

1.2. Rubella.

Epidemiological assessment of rubella elimination in Europe.

1.3. Mumps.

Study of the incidence of mumps in the period 2006-2008 and analysis of the risk of its epidemic spread in the country.

2. Epidemiological surveillance of respiratory infections: influenza, legionellosis and Legionnaires' disease, whooping cough, Respiratory syncytial infection, SARS.

3. Epidemiology and surveillance of other ARIs.

4. Vaccines and immunoprophylaxis. Health communication. Immunization information systems and registries.

The main practical direction of the candidate's work is immunization policy and the effects of its implementation in the country. The developments in this direction are divided as follows:

4.1. Immunoprophylaxis of measles, mumps and rubella.

Dr. Marinova is a leading expert of the Bulgarian team in an international project of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: "Let's talk about disease prevention" (2012-2013) and its continuation "Multifaceted interventions aimed at improving immunization coverage with measles-mumps-rubella vaccine" (2013-2014), aimed at improving the communication of medical and health professionals with parents, especially from vulnerable communities, on the issues of vaccine-preventable diseases, with a focus on measles, mumps and rubella, and their specific prevention through immunizations.

4.2. Immunizations and immunization policy.

4.3. Vaccines and immunoprophylaxis of other socially significant infectious diseases: HPV infection, rotavirus infection.

4.4. Information immunization systems and registries.

5. Epidemiology of new and returning acute infectious and parasitic diseases - COVID-19, malaria.

5.1. COVID-19 and the effects on the implementation of the National Immunization Calendar and the overall immunization policy implemented in the territory of the Sofia City District.

5.2. Risks for the development of local tropical diseases – malaria.

6. Additional scientific areas in the work of Dr. Lili Marinova are:

6.1. International travel and immunoprophylaxis.

6.2. International health regulations and border health control.

Scientific contributions.

Based on the presented scientific works, the following more significant contributions have been identified:

1. Contributions of an original scientific nature:

- A detailed study of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Sofia City District was conducted and the effects of the pandemic on the implementation of the National Immunization Program in the Sofia City District were analyzed and assessed.
- For the first time in the country, a study was conducted on the influence of a wide range of socio-economic factors on the severity of the course and the frequency of severe complications (pneumonia and encephalitis) in measles.
- For the first time in the country, a study was conducted on the attitudes of various target groups of the population regarding vaccines and immunizations in order to identify the reasons for the existence of so-called "pockets" of non-immune population.

2. Contributions of a scientific-applied nature:

- An assessment of the implementation of the National Immunization Program in Sofia City District during the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out.

Based on the results of the assessment, specific solutions were formulated to improve the immunization strategy, such as: organizing and conducting catch-up immunization campaigns aimed at specific risk groups of the population.

- An assessment of the effectiveness of the Information System for collecting and analyzing data on measles incidence was carried out.

Based on the results of the evaluation, the system has been further developed and improved. An extension of the system has been developed and implemented, creating new capabilities, both in the part intended for data entry and in its analytical part.

The most significant contribution is determined to be the ability of the system to register, notify and report on investigated and rejected cases of measles and rubella, which brings it as close as possible to the European requirements for specificity, sensitivity and timeliness of surveillance of these two diseases

Conclusion

After comparing the submitted materials for this competition with the minimum national requirements for the purpose, it can be concluded that they meet the set criteria.

The presented scientific products are sufficient in volume and content and meet the requirements of the national regulatory documents for the procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions, in this case - for awarding the academic position of "Associate Professor".

On these grounds, I give my positive vote to Dr. Lili Emilova Rahamimova-Marinova, MD, to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the National Center for Biological Sciences.

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Prepared the opinion

Ass. Professor Dr. Tonka Varleva, MD, PhD