REVIEW

from

Prof. Dr. Hristo Vasilev Kozhuharov, MD, PhD

Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna

About thesis with title:

„SPECIFICS AND DYNAMICS OF THE PAIN SYMPTOMS AND EXPERIENCES IN PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION"

for acquiring an educational and scientific degree "doctor", by

professional direction 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialty Psychiatry

TATYANA IVANOVA TELBIZOVA

Scientific supervisor:

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By order № P-109-172/23.04.2021 of the Rector of MU Varna, based on a report № 102-811/02.04.2021 from the protocol of a meeting of the Department of psychiatry and medical psychology at MU-Varna, and on the basis of a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine under the protocol № .... I was elected as a chairman of the scientific jury for the defense of the thesis of Tatiana Ivanova Telbizova on the topic: "SPECIFICS AND DYNAMICS OF THE PAIN SYMPTOMS AND EXPERIENCES IN PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION". At the first meeting of the scientific jury I was assigned to prepare a review of the procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

1. Actuality of the topic

Dr. Tatiana Telbizova overlaps a significant and current issue for the comorbidity of chronic pain with depression. Chronic pain is one of the leading causes of disability in the world and is a global health problem. The onset of depression in patients with chronic pain impairs daily functioning, quality of life and increases the risk of self-aggression among this group of patients. In this regard, the study of the influence of the factors that provoke and maintain chronic pain is at the center of research interest not only in scientific but also in clinical terms. Patients with chronic pain are 20% of the world's population. Between 30 – 50% of these patients have symptoms of depression. The share of unrecognized cases of depression in patients with chronic pain is high – nearly 35% according to a study from 2018. These data justify the relevance of the topic presented by the doctoral student.

Pain and depression are phenomena with common neurobiological relations, which proves the need to be studied together. These data provoke the need for a battery of tools for the clinical assessment of pain and affective symptoms in patients with chronic pain. This would reduce cases of the clinically unrecognized and cases of depression in patients with chronic pain.

Pain as a phenomenon has many dimensions – philosophical (phenomenological), psychological and biomedical. In the thesis presented by Dr. Telbizova, these three dimensions are studied, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods.

2. Characteristics of the thesis

The thesis consists of an introduction, 7 chapters, a bibliography and 6 appendices with a total volume of 179 pages. The contents of chapters one to

four are divided into separate paragraphs. The results are presented in 77 tables and 20 figures. The list of used literature sources includes 370 titles, of which 16 are written in Cyrillic script and 354 – in Latin script.

The introduction justifies the choice and relevance of the chosen research topic.

Chapter one presents a literature review in which the doctoral student presents the development in the concepts of the essence of pain, predetermining the change in the generally accepted pain definitions. The general neurobiological relationships between the phenomena of stress and pain, as well as the biopsychosocial aspects of pain are presented. The doctoral student made a detailed analysis of the factors relevant to the persistence of chronic pain, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the problem. The role of depression as a leading psychological factor for the manifestation of chronic pain on the one hand and as a depressive episode on the other is presented in detail. An analysis of qualitative research related to the experiences of patients with chronic pain has been made. The influence of the factors important for the formation of experience is considered. The role of phenomenological approaches in the individual assessment of patients with chronic pain is emphasized. The conclusions of the literature review outline the research framework of the areas and issues related to the research goal.

The second chapter presents the purpose, tasks, hypotheses, methods, research design, sample and tools.

The main aim of the study was to investigate the influence of the severity of depression and anxiety (state and trait) on the intensity of pain and their influence on the specifics and dynamics of pain symptoms and experiences in comorbid patients with chronic pain and depression.

There are five tasks, designed and pursuant to support the implementation of the purpose of the study. Four hypotheses have been raised.

The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis and interpretation of results. The data collection methods are: Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D-17), Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), Spielberger Anxiety Assessment Questionnaire (STAI) – State Anxiety Scale (S) and Trait Anxiety Scale (T), Visual Analog Scale (VAS) and semi-structured interview for researching pain symptoms and experiences. The study is performed in two stages. The second stage is carried out three months after the first. The study sample includes 120 participants with chronic non-

malignant pain of various origins, divided into two groups – a group with a depression and a control group without depression.

The same chapter presents the limitations and framework of the study, where the doctoral student presents perspectives for future research related to the presented issues.

Chapter three presents the results in tables and figures that facilitate the perception of the processed data. The data showing that reducing the severity of depression reduces the intensity of pain in comorbid patients with depression are particularly useful from a clinical point of view. These findings highlight the need for antidepressant therapy, not only to treat the symptoms of depression, but also to reduce pain sensation. The severity of depression is a major variable affecting pain and anxiety. Therefore, the treatment of depression could be defined as a central concept in pain management. The proposed rating scales are highly sensitive and can be used to study and dynamically monitor pain and affective symptoms in patients with chronic pain and depression.

The results of content analysis, which support the data from quantitative methods are substantial. The specific and dominant experiences in patients with depression and their dynamics when reducing the severity of depression are presented. The study proves that depression is a factor in the manifestation of specific experiences in chronic pain.

The doctoral candidate presents a model for studying the experience of pain, covering several dimensions: sensory, experiences during pain, functioning and way of perceiving the situation during pain. Given the multifaceted nature of an experience, the proposed research model is original, in-depth and comprehensive.

A discussion of the results is presented in chapter four. The analysis of the data is compared with the data from the literature. Each section of the analysis ends with the bringing out of generalized conclusions. The discussion of the data from the content-analysis is compared with the data from the quantitative methods used in the study.

Chapter five presents the conclusions from the presented research, which are relevant to the purpose and the outlined research tasks.

In the sixth chapter are presented contributions having scientific and scientific-applied value:

1. Conceptualization and building a model for the study of patients with chronic pain and depression, combining qualitative and quantitative methods.
2. Offering a set of test methods for assessment and dynamic monitoring of pain and affective symptoms in patients with chronic pain and depression.
3. Conceptualization and operationalization of pain experiences in patients with chronic pain and depression in the direction of their deconstruction to a lower hierarchical level for description and analysis.

The last chapter presents a conclusion related to the nature of the study. The thesis shows the author's deep commitment to the problem.

3. Recommendations for the thesis

I have a recommendation for increasing the number of the sample and looking for the influence of other variables that would be relevant to the problem.

The attached documentation is complete. The requirements of the low for the Academic Staff Development Low in the Republic of Bulgaria (ASDLRB) and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at MU – Varna are met.

4. Conclusion

The overall structure and the contribution moments in the research give me the grounds to recommend to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury, in case of successful defense, to vote positively for the conferment of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in Psychiatry to Tatiana Telbizova.

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Varna

17.05. 2021

Prepared by:

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