

STATEMENT OF OPINION

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Re: dissertation thesis entitled: “**System of indicators for quality measurement and evaluation in Bulgarian healthcare**”, authored by **Valeriya Veselinova Nikolova** – PhD students on a full-time training.

For: for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Philosophy Doctor” in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and law sciences, professional field 3.7. Administration and management, specialty “Organisation and management outside the field of material production (in healthcare)”

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Antoniya Slavcheva Dimova – Yordanova, PhD

Grounds for assigning the statement of opinion: By Order № R-109-194/28.04.2022 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna determining the members of the Scientific Jury and in accordance with Protocol №№1/11.05.2022 of the meeting of the Scientific Jury for determining the reviewers for the procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Philosophy Doctor” by candidate Valeriya Veselinova Nikolova.

I. Information about the procedure and general assessment of the dissertation thesis

According to the current procedure, all the required documents are submitted which are envisaged in the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its application and the Regulations for the academic staff at MU – Varna.

The PhD student Valeriya Veselinova Nikolova has passed her training in the doctoral programme “Organisation and management outside the field of material production (in healthcare)” in professional field 3.7. Administration and management, field of higher education 3. Social, economic and law sciences. She was enrolled in the full-time training programme by Order № R-109-85/01.02.2019 of the Rector of MU – Varna at the Department of Healthcare Economics and Management with scientific supervisor Prof. Antoniya Slavcheva Dimova – Yordanova, PhD.

She has successfully passed the examinations for the doctoral minimum, the activities from the individual training plan have been accomplished and the required credits have been collected with positive attestation marks during the period of training in the PhD programme.

The dissertation has been finished within the deadline and a procedure has been initiated for defense before a scientific jury by Order № P-109-194/28.04.2022 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna.

The dissertation thesis of Valeriya Nikolova presents the topical issue of the quality of healthcare in Bulgaria, more specifically focusing on the system of indicators for quality measurement and assessment. The value and the usefulness of the study is increased by the genuine approach applied by the PhD student in the study of the problem through the perspective of the effective functioning of the health system.

The study includes a total of 182 pages, of which 123 pages of main text. The structure is logically connected and includes an introduction, and study organization. In **Chapter I** the theoretical bases are examined of the quality in healthcare together with the approaches for its measurement and evaluation. **Chapter II** is dedicated to the quality measurement in Bulgarian healthcare and **Chapter III** looks at the studied attitudes and needs for raising the awareness of citizens and medical professionals as regards quality and its measurement. In **Chapter IV** a system is presented for measuring and assessing the healthcare quality following an extensive study and analysis of the results. The dissertation thesis ends logically with conclusions.

A valuable addition to the main text are the four annexes with a total volume of 40 pages, showing the results from the analyses of the legislative regulations for the quality measurement and assessment in Bulgarian healthcare as well as the main study instruments – questionnaires for citizens and medical professionals.

The scientific work and the obtained results are well visualized with 26 tables and 32 figures. The bibliography contains a total of 175 sources, of which 53 in Bulgarian language and 122 in English. The predominant part of the cited publications are dated during the last decade, which indicates the author's awareness of the recent studies in the field of healthcare quality.

II. Characteristics and assessment of the dissertation thesis content

The introduction presents the motivation for the selection of the topic, its topicality and practical feasibility. The research thesis, the aim of the dissertation study and the set tasks are formulated in a clear and appropriate manner. The subject and the object of the study are determined and an adequate research tools are applied. The specified study limitations indicate the PhD student's correctness in view of the specificity and the wide range of study work in the field

of quality. In this respect, Valeriya Nikolova has succeeded in capturing the numerous indicators for quality assessment, in carrying out a large-scale research and propose a system of indicators which is valuable for following studies and for the practice. From the beginning to the end of her research, her personal attitude to the problem filed and professional engagement are obvious.

In **Chapter I** of the dissertation thesis, the PhD student analyses and summarizes the theoretical grounds for the content and the understanding of quality of and in healthcare. She discusses the approaches and the tools used for its measurement and assessment together with the definitions of quality in healthcare. Here again, one can observe the personal views and contribution in clarifying the difference in the meaning of quality **of** and **in** healthcare as well as delineating the scope and levels of analysis of the two terms.

Fifteen conceptual frameworks and the accompanying systems of assessment indicators are studied and presented, referring to 905 quality indicators.

In **Chapter II**, the legislative framework is analysed, which is used for the quality assurance in Bulgaria, the focus being placed on the therapeutic sector. Various practices are examined for quality measurement and assessment together with the data available for the level of quality. Useful information is collected and analysed, following which it is systematized according to several criteria based on the literary review. The PhD student shows research courage to analyse the current normative legislation on the basis of the medical standards and the element of quality, which is a contribution to the differentiation of the discrepancies, contradictions or deficits in the normative requirements I possibilities for their overcoming. Chapter II presents also a rich analysis of the available data for the quality of healthcare in Bulgaria and the needs for completing the information.

Chapter III of the dissertation presents for discussion the results from the conducted own sociological studies. They are divided into two main parts, the first one analyzing the results from the study among the citizens. A valuable part of the study is the citizens' understanding of healthcare quality, their needs for information as well as their opinion about the quality of healthcare in Bulgaria. The second part shows the results from the study conducted among the medical professionals, who give a valuable perspective complementing the results from previous studies and identifying the differences among the stakeholders. I rate these results as very useful for the practice as they are the starting point for reducing the differences and overcoming the barriers for achieving better and more sustainable quality in the therapeutic sector.

In **Chapter IV**, a conceptual model is proposed for a system of indicators for measuring and assessing the quality of healthcare in Bulgaria. The conceptual model is associated with the quality elements related to the structure, the process or the result at different levels and according to the problems and their solutions. The contribution of the dissertation work is the system of indicators for healthcare quality measurement and assessment in Bulgaria, which includes 89 indicators, grouped by quality elements and the respective criteria for assessment. This model gives guidelines for the necessary data and information which have to be collected, summarized and analysed at different levels of the healthcare system and furthermore an approach for its introduction into practice.

The conclusion follows the logical structure of the thesis and is formulated exhaustively and clearly.

III. Contributions and significance of the study for the practice

I accept the five contributions presented in the dissertation summary. I would like to point out the valuable analyses of the current possibilities for measuring the quality of healthcare in Bulgaria, of the legislative basis and the well argued needs for change and improvement of the acting normative framework. An important contribution for the PhD student is the conclusion drawn for the introduction of a system for quality measurement and assessment in Bulgarian healthcare.

IV. Dissertation summary and publications

The dissertation summary reflects truthfully the content of the dissertation and emphasizes the most important results and conclusions of the study. It covers 45 pages and includes the chapters: introduction, aim and tasks, material and methods, conclusions and recommendations, conclusion, contributions of the dissertation work and list of publications.

PhD student Valeriya Nikolova also submits **3 publications** (including one in English language). Her participation in Bulgarian and international scientific fora shows that the topics and the ideas in her dissertation thesis are commented in the wscientific circles and are visible in the public space.

V. Critical remarks and recommendations

I recommend to Valeriya Nikolova to extend her research by including other groups of respondents and publish a monograph in Bulgarian and English language. This will make it even

more useful for the practice and most importantly, for the better functioning of the healthcare system through quality improvement.

VI. Conclusion

The dissertation study offers a wide view on the available European and global models for application and highlights the need for the implementation of solutions in Bulgaria.

The study is focused on the topic and is logically consistent. The dissertation is a study in which the PhD student demonstrates profound knowledge, consistent searching and drawing of practical solutions based on a convincing and broadly formatted empirical analysis. Opportunities are apparent for development and continuation of the study both in a theoretical and practical aspect, which is an indicator of the sustainability of the results.

The dissertation work meets the requirements of the Act on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the regulations for its application and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at MU-Varna.

All the above gives me grounds to give a **positive evaluation** and propose that the educational and scientific degree “Philosophy Doctor” in scientific field “*Organisation and management outside the field of material production (in healthcare)*” in professional field 3.7. *Administration and management* is conferred to **Valeriya Veselinova Nikolova**.

16.06.2022

Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury:

/Prof. Todorka Kostadinova, PhD/

