

THESIS

From Associate Professor Delyana Petrova Hadzhideleva, PhD

Department of Healthcare

Faculty of Public Health, 'Prof. D-r Tsekomir Vodenicharov, D.Sc.'

Medical University - Sofia

External member of the scientific jury, confirmed by order № P-109-591/29.12.2021 of the Rector of Medical University 'Prof. D-r Paraskev Stoyanov', Varna

Regarding: Dissertation thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific title 'Doctor' in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and sport, professional pathway 7.4 Public Health, specialisation 'Health care Management'

Topic: 'Midwife care for women after birth – approaches and opportunities for optimising the role of the midwife'

Author: Rumyana Nikolova Laleva, self-development PhD-student on the doctoral programme 'Healthcare Management', department of 'Healthcare', Faculty of 'Public Health', Medical University 'Prof. D-r Paraskev Stoyanov', Varna, enrolled with order № P 109-134/27.03.2020.

Academic lead: Assoc. Prof. Valya Dimitrova, PhD

The administrative documents and materials submitted for review have been prepared and presented in compliance with the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for development of the scientific staff at the Medical University - Varna.

Background and career development of the PhD student

Rumyana Laleva was born on 7th January 1969, in Kavarna. She obtained secondary medical education in 1990 in IPZKSSO 'D-r Nencho Nikolaev'-Varna, and graduated as a Midwife from the Semi-postgraduate Institute – Varna in 1996. She continued her training and advanced her education with the Bachelor's degree in 'Healthcare Management' from the Medical University – Varna in 2011; which was followed by a Master's degree in the same course.

She began her work experience in 1990 as a midwife in Obstetrics ward in the Municipal hospital – Tervel; she was a midwife in different wards in SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY FOR ACTIVE TREATMENT ‘Prof. D-r D. Stamatov’ - Varna between 1997 and 2015. She is appointed the role of Lecturer in 2015, and later in 2018 – assistant professor at the Department of ‘Healthcare’, FPH at MU – Varna, where she is leading various courses in the Midwifery programme.

In 2020 she graduated a specialization in ‘Public Health’. The education and career development of the candidate undoubtedly shows that she possesses substantial professional and teaching experience, and has proven to be a competent specialist in her professional field. The attached series of evidence of publications and certificates for participation in scientific forums, demonstrate her determination to continuously upgrade her qualifications and competencies.

The academic development of assistant Rumyana Laleva continues with her enrolment as a PhD-student and the work on her current dissertation thesis: ‘Midwife care for women after birth – approaches and opportunities for optimising the role of the midwife’.

Overall characteristics of the dissertation thesis

The volume, structure and format of the submitted dissertation for review fully comply with the current requirements for an in-depth scientific research. The dissertation consists of 190 standard pages and is visualised with 81 graphs, tables and 10 appendixes. 178 resources have been cited, out of which 110 are in Cyrillic, 50 in Latin, and 18 internet sources. The content demonstrates a wide breadth of knowledge and awareness of the author.

Relevance of the dissertation

The topic of the dissertation is extremely relevant and dedicated to an increasingly more debatable issue, namely the lack of midwife patronage care for a woman after birth. In light with the domestic reforms after 2000, the ability for a midwife to be close to the pregnant woman was systematically restricted and the common practice to conduct at-home patronage was discontinued. The active role of the midwife in this process is of high importance for the normal running of the post-birth period, and for the ensuring minimal risk of complications for the mother

and the newborn. There is a discrepancy between the needs of the expectant mothers and the ability of the current organisation of health care to meet those. This provides justification for the chosen topic by the PhD-student.

Assessment of the dissertation

In the **first chapter**, the author conducted a comprehensive literature review on the topic. Historically she has analysed the origin and the development of midwife care, from antique times to current days. Based on various opinions, the PhD student evidences the organisation and methodology of women's consultation in Bulgaria before the reforms and in modern times. Additionally, she reviews and analyses home visits to the mother as a necessary and sought-after form of care. The data shows that the midwife is acknowledged in many countries around the world as an essential and rewarding contribution towards high quality after-birth care. She also presents the legal regulations for the care of pregnant women and mothers up to 45 days after the birth in our country at the moment.

The **second chapter** outlines the objective, tasks and research methodology. Based on the comprehensive literature review, the research thesis is clearly formulated and linked to the subject of the research. The objectives are clearly defined and harmonised with the title. To meet the objectives, ten tasks have been carried out. Three work hypotheses have been formulated. The research methods have been carefully selected in order to bring in reliability and persuasiveness to the conclusions, which demonstrates the ability of the PhD student to plan and conduct research independently.

The **third chapter** of the dissertation outlines the results from the independent research, their interpretation and analysis. The in-depth and competent analysis of the empirical data from the research demonstrates important trends and outcomes which Rumyana Laleva was able to identify and define. She finds that the role of a midwife is currently only formal and there is a need for optimisation of midwife care in the puerperium. The results from the research demonstrate that Bulgarian women who have given birth would seek advice from midwives on questions related to care in the after-birth period. The data from midwives who participated in the survey also affirms their positive attitude and motivation for providing patronage midwife care. The alignment of opinion of midwives and

patients evidences the need to put a protocol in place for midwife care for the provision of home patronage in the puerperium.

Chapter four is dedicated to the experimental programme 'Midwives in support of motherhood' which was developed by the author – this demonstrates her creative and innovative abilities. Continuing her research in practical terms, Rumyana Laleva applies her own model for patronage care to 52 mothers for the period of 42 days, in order to establish the organizational aspects of patronage care after birth and the role of the midwife in their implementation. The results after the completion of the programme show that 70% of the participating mothers confidently stated their need for midwife support as a way to achieve security and peace in the postpartum period. I highly appreciate this part of her work.

Conclusions, recommendations and contribution

Based on the analysis and the conducted research in the dissertation, nine conclusions have been identified and logically systematised, which give an overall idea of the results of the research. The concrete recommendations for the MoH, BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS and MU have been presented in detail and in a persuasive manner.

The doctoral student's contributions are significant, with theoretical-cognitive and practical-applied character. A significant contribution is the developed and proposed Program for postgraduate midwives education which will enable health care professionals to advance their skills and knowledge in performing counselling activities for women in the puerperium, implementing active obstetric care aimed at early detection of pathological abnormalities and performing quality, effective and preventive activities.

The **abstract** is presented in compliance with the requirements and outlines the main results and ideas in the dissertation in a concise manner.

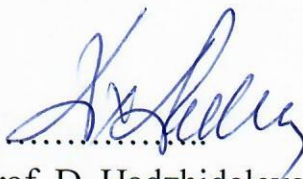
CONCLUSION

Assist. Prof. Rumyana Laleva's dissertation on 'Midwife care for women after birth - approaches and opportunities for optimising the role of the midwife' is an independent and in-depth theoretical and empirical research on a clearly defined problem. The topic is extremely relevant, developed precisely and has a practical application in the field of puerperal care for mothers in outpatient care. The overall

work evidences the professional experience of the doctoral student in the field of midwife care and her emotional commitment to the chosen topic. I can summarize that the dissertation meets the criteria of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the development of the scientific staff at the Medical University - Varna.

Based on the complex evaluation of the dissertation and the abstract, I give my positive assessment and strongly recommend the members of the Scientific Jury to decide on the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to assistant Rumyana Nikolova Laleva in professional field 7.4. Public Health, specialty "Health Care Management"

30 Jan 2022
Sofia

Reviewer 
(Assoc. Prof. D. Hadzhideleva, PhD)