

## **OPINION**

**from**

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Angel Kanchev University of Ruse  
Member of the scientific jury according to Order R-109-120/15.02.2023.  
of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna**

**Regarding:** Dissertation work on the topic "Modern aspects of providing safe hospital environment in the practice of nurses" by Zhaneta Vasileva Stoyanova in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.4. Public health and scientific specialty "Management of health care" with supervisor Prof. Sonya Koleva Toncheva, Dr. P. H. Sc.

### **Procedure data**

By Order of the Rector of Mu-Varna No. 109-43 of 31.01.2020, Zhaneta Vasileva Stoyanova was enrolled as a doctoral student in full-time study to obtain the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management". A Protocol for a successfully passed doctoral exam based on order No. R-109-141 of 13.04.2021 has been submitted. On the basis of a decision of the departmental council of the Department of Health Care regarding the readiness for public defense and a proposal for a Scientific Jury, Zhaneta Stoyanova was discharged with the right to defense by Order of the Rector of the MU - Varna No. 109-120/15.02.2023.

### **Biographical data and career development**

Zhaneta Vasileva Stoyanova graduated from the Varna Medical College in 1989 with a bachelor's educational and qualification degree in nursing. She obtained a bachelor's EQD in Health Care Management (1999) at the Sofia Medical University, a master's EQD in Public Health (2003) at the Medical University of Varna and a master's EQD in Health Care Management' (2011) at the same university.

She began her professional career in 1989 at the MPHAT - Varna at the Military Medical Academy, successively as a nurse in the Emergency Department (until 1993) and in the Cardiology Department. Since 2001, she has held the position of Head Nurse in the same medical facility. From 31.01.2020 she has been a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Health Care in the scientific specialty of Health Care Management.

The dissertation work developed by Zhaneta Stoyanova comprises 147 pages, structured according to standard requirements, including: Introduction; Analysis of the literature on the problem; Methodology of scientific research; Findings from own research on safe hospital environments in nursing practice; Practical approaches to optimize the process of providing safe hospital environment with the participation of nurses; Conclusions, proposals and recommendations. It is richly illustrated with 47 figures, 33 tables and 5 appendices. The bibliographic reference contains 260 literary sources, of which 66 are in Cyrillic and 194 are in Latin.



## **Evaluation of the topicality of the topic**

Providing safe hospital environment is an important aspect in nursing practice and is a priority issue worldwide. The combination of processes, technologies and human interaction in the process of providing medical care create opportunities for adverse effects that can lead to varying degrees of health damage, as well as significant financial losses. The complex organizational structure of medical institutions requires good coordination of activities in order to achieve high quality of health services. Increasingly, the hospital environment is seen as a source of nosocomial infections and gaps in patient care caused by a variety of factors leading to an increased level of societal dissatisfaction that could have been avoided. The contribution and role of nurses in providing safe hospital environment is increasingly being considered as a condition for providing quality and safe hospital care. Additional qualification and postgraduate training of health care professionals in issues on providing safe hospital environment and infection control will contribute to reducing gaps and errors in the work process. Raising the awareness of students during their training and emphasizing issues related to the safety of hospital environment and the provision of quality health care will build responsibility and strive for quality in their work in the future.

## **Literature review**

The author makes an analytical review of the literature related to the safety and quality of health care in chapter one with a volume of 30 pages. It examines the dimensions of health care quality. It presents the world experience in identifying the essence of the quality and safety of health care and the healthy environment in nursing practice, the position of the World Health Organization, the American Nurses Association, the US Institute of Medicine and a number of authors who worked on this issue. The process of providing safe hospital environment in Bulgaria, as part of the National Health Strategy 2030, the normative and sub-normative acts of the country in the field of hospital environment safety, which are not united in a concept at the national level, are examined. Information on health service-associated infections was reviewed. An analysis was carried out of the gaps in the prevention and control of health service-associated infections by main components of the WHO. The key figure and role of modern nurses and its autonomous activity in strengthening and preserving the health of the sick and healthy person is outlined.

## **Methodology**

In the second chapter of the dissertation, the methodology of the scientific research is presented in the amount of 16 pages, including the goal, tasks, working hypotheses, object and subject, scope of the study, stages and organization of implementation, methods of statistical processing and analysis of information.

The purpose of the dissertation research is clearly stated. For its implementation, 6 tasks are presented, which precisely reflect the scientific and research work of the doctoral student. The volume of the survey was determined, covering 285 people, divided into four groups of respondents. The first group was composed of 145 nurses working in high-risk wards. The second group includes 20 educators from health care departments of MU - Varna and affiliates. The third group comprised 100 hospitalized patients in clinics/wards with a high risk of spreading health service-associated infections. The fourth group is composed of experts - head



nurses, health care professionals with a specialty in "Hospital hygiene, prevention and control of infections", epidemiologists and public health inspectors with a total number of 22.

The criteria for inclusion of individuals from each group are presented in detail, and the principle of voluntariness and random selection is also applied. The design of the dissertation includes two main components – theoretical and empirical research. A qualitative method was applied to collect information from university educators and experts, and a specific toolkit was developed. A quantitative survey was conducted among medical specialists and patients, and an author's toolkit was developed in the form of questionnaires. The key directions of the study are presented. The stages of the scientific and research work are presented in tabular form and reflect the specific activities and the time frame of their implementation. A wide range of sociological and statistical methods were used, which allowed for valuable measurements and conclusions to be made. The data in the study were processed with the statistical package IBM Statistics - SPSS for Windows, ver . 19 and MS Excel 2019.

### **Results of own studies**

In the third chapter, the results of the own research are presented in a volume of 34 pages. The characteristics of the researched groups of respondents - nurses, patients, educators and experts - are presented.

The results of **the first group** show extensive practical experience and long work experience. In terms of their awareness and preparation to provide the process of safe hospital environment, nurses self -assessed highly, and an increase in self-esteem was observed with increasing educational level. The observed low share of application of scientific literature, courses and training in the information process is striking, as the main sources of information are head nurses; other nurses and infection control professionals. An interest in participating in educational forms for continuing education was found among some of the respondents, and among others - a lack of motivation, due to the high professional commitment and lack of financial affordability.

**The second group** covered is **patients**. Their demographic characteristics and the sequence of hospitalizations were examined . There is an even distribution by gender and age, with half of them being hospitalized for the first time. A sense of a safe hospital environment and the conditions of safety in the application of nursing care and manipulations are established, correlating with patient education.

The third studied group – **teachers also** rate highly the skills of nurses, rating in a high degree as excellent and very good ones.

**Experts** define as significant the role and contribution of nurses in the process of providing safe hospital environment. There is definiteness regarding the need for additional training, the need to optimize the process and the introduction of new models to provide safe hospital environment. Suggestions made include: staffing; micromanaging adverse events; effective communication; creating a culture of safety and trust and continuous improvement through training. **The role and contribution of the nurse in the process of providing safe hospital environment is proven, through a positive assessment of their contribution** according to a significant part of the surveyed persons.



**The fourth chapter** of the dissertation is dedicated to practical approaches to optimizing the process with the participation of nurses, with a volume of 23 pages. The author presents a **Model for optimizing the process of providing safe hospital environment with the participation of nurses** for the preparation of which an **Organizational framework** is created that can be used as basis in the application of the principles contained or as a diagnostic tool. Fundamental to the Organizational Framework are the creation of a safety culture and a system of control and analysis of the hospital environment to provide safety, reliability, improvement and sustainability of the process.

**The model** is a set of tools and activities performed in a certain sequence in order to optimize the process of management, control and assessment of safe hospital environment. It illustrates the alignment of nursing practice with the elements essential to achieving successful outcomes. At its core, it depicts the goal of a perfect and safe hospital environment. It presents the methods of providing safe hospital environment and includes six supporting components - leadership, skill support, critical thinking, safety culture, quality and patient safety. At the core are the values associated with safety management policies and giving structure to decision-making and practices.

**The Author's Model** can be a useful tool for health field organizations and can change the way nurses think about evidence-based practice. It will contribute to increasing the efficiency of nursing care, increasing the level of quality of life of patients, clarity regarding the status of nurses in the process of providing safe hospital environment, as well as affirming the profession.

**An Algorithm is presented in applying new models to improve the process of providing safe hospital environment**, which is based on the belief that nurses need to build competencies through which to consciously recognize safety gaps or errors and offer an opportunity to improve processes.

The expert assessment carried out of the theoretical Model confirms its necessity and applicability in practice and the conviction that it will provide an opportunity to increase the quality of health care.

The doctoral student has addressed **proposals and recommendations** to the Ministry of Health, to the Medical Universities, hospital management at the level of medical institutions and BAHP, which I consider adequate. My personal opinion is that part of the recommendations regarding the development of rules for good nursing practice in the process of providing safe hospital environment and the development and introduction of specific nursing documentation for recording deviations in the same process should be developed at the national level.

On the basis of the dissertation research, **theoretical-cognitive and practical-applied contributions have been made**, reflecting the scientific achievements of the author, which I accept.

**The abstract** faithfully and completely reproduces the content of the dissertation. A list of 5 scientific publications and participations related to the topic of the Dissertation work, published in journals and collections of scientific conferences, is presented.

### **Personal impressions**

I haven't known the PhD student Zhaneta Stoyanova personally. I form impressions from the materials and dissertation work provided to me and consider that she excels in purposefulness,

consistency and precision in her work. I appreciate that only a very good professional dedicated to the cause of improving the quality and safety of nursing practice could achieve such a high quality of scientific work.

### **Conclusion**

The dissertation research is distinguished by its originality and significant contribution to the practice of nursing, which contributes to the creation of new knowledge in the field of providing a safe hospital environment and affirming the key role in this process. The dissertation is presented in a complete and well-shaped form. Based on the overall assessment of the documentation provided to me, I believe that Zhaneta Vasileva Stoyanova fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the criteria and requirements of the National center for information and documentation. All this gives me reason to confidently give my positive vote for awarding Zhaneta Vasileva Stoyanova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management"

**06.04.2023**  
City of Ruse

**Opinion prepared by:** .....  
Assoc. Prof. Greta Koleva, Dr. P. H. Sc.

