

Standpoint

From: assoc. prof. dr. Mariana Dimitrova-Haruil, DMD, PhD

Scientific specialty "Pediatric Dentistry", Faculty of Dental Medicine, MU-Plovdiv, member of the Scientific Jury, appointed by Order No. RK-109-239/ 04/13/2023 of the Rector of the MU-Varna.

Regarding: Procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic: "Oral manifestations in children with autism and some syndromes", in the doctoral program "**Pediatric Dentistry**", in professional direction 7.2 **Health care and sports**, of a doctoral student of independent training at the Department of Pediatric Dentistry of Faculty of Dental Medicine at the Medical University of Varna.

Author of the dissertation: dr. Siyana Georgieva Atanasova

Academic advisor: prof. dr. Radosveta Stoyanova Andreeva-Borisova, DMD, PhD, DSc

General presentation of the procedure and the PhD student.

The set of documents presented to me on an electronic flashdrive have been prepared in accordance with the ZRASRB and the Regulations of the Ministry of Education - Varna for the acquisition of the ESD "Doctor" and includes all the necessary accessories.

Dr. Siyana Georgieva Atanasova was born in 1993 in the city of Burgas. She completed her higher education with a master's degree in "Dental medicine" at the Faculty of Dental Medicine at the Medical University of Varna in 2018. Since 2018, she has been an assistant at the Department of Pediatric Dentistry at the Faculty of Dental medicine, Medical University of Varna, where she has been working until now. She participates in the teaching of Bulgarian and English-

speaking students. She is fluent in English. She has acquired the specialty "Pediatric Dentistry" since 2022.

Relevance of the topic and of the set goals and tasks.

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), worldwide more than 15% of the population lives with disabilities, and 5.1% of them are children, of which 0.7% are severely disabled. In Bulgaria, the estimated number of children with disabilities is over 32,000, although there is a lack of detailed information on their exact number, and in recent years the institutions have directed their efforts to creating a favorable learning environment and integrating them into general education kindergartens and schools. Oral health is a very important aspect of general health, especially for vulnerable groups such as children with specific health needs. The demand for dental treatment for patients with intellectual disabilities, physical limitations, social and emotional deficits is also increasing. This requires a broad view of the dental practitioner, which often leads to a multidisciplinary approach. However, many professionals still find it challenging to provide better treatment. Children with intellectual disabilities exhibit insecure emotional behavior and restlessness with a short attention span. Therefore, it is essential to reduce anxiety by establishing proper dentist-patient-parent relationships for adequate implementation of dental prophylaxis and treatment. The pathogenesis of oral diseases in these children can be very extensive, and knowledge on the part of treating physicians can help to implement multifactorial treatment and improve their standard of living. Providing comprehensive and adequate information to help dentists and parents in the oral health care of these children is the subject of scientific interest of many researchers worldwide.

Pediatric dentistry is responsible for informing, motivating, and preparing mothers of children with autism and certain syndromes for early care in order to build and maintain the oral health of their children.

Emphasis on the oral health of children with special needs is right and timely in order to provide primary dental care to our children. I accept the choice of this topic and define it as current and dissertable.

Structure of the dissertation.

The presented dissertation is written on 178 pages, illustrated with 37 tables, 15 figures, 26 graphs and 6 appendices. The bibliography includes 399 literary sources, of which 33 are in Cyrillic and 366 are in Latin. The presented thesis is properly structured. It contains all the main elements for the development and presentation of a dissertation work: introduction, literature review, purpose and tasks, material and methods /for each task/, results and discussion /for each task/, conclusion, bibliography and appendices.

Familiarity with the problem.

The literature review is spread over 60 pages, sufficiently informative and properly structured. Provides extensive information regarding the collective definition of children with special needs and seeks to cover all characteristics of this contingent that are directly related to their health care. The collected and presented literary data are oriented towards the concept and reflect the studies published so far in our country regarding the oral health of children with special needs. The review ends with a conclusion that emphasizes the unresolved problems in our country, giving grounds for choosing this topical dissertation topic and defining its purpose and tasks.

Dr. Siyana Atanasova correctly formulated the purpose of the dissertation, namely: "To investigate the oral status of children with autism and some syndromes, and the treatment-prophylactic approach to these children".

To fulfill the formulated goal, the doctoral student sets herself 4 tasks. I believe that the tasks are sufficient and correctly formulated to fulfill the set goal. Material and methods are detailed for each task. The objects of the research / 60 children each from the diseases selected by the author and 60 healthy children / were very precisely selected in order to fulfill the tasks set. The research methods used allow achieving the set goals and obtaining an adequate answer to the tasks of the dissertation work.

The results are comprehensive and presented for each task separately. They are properly described, analyzed, interpreted and critically discussed in the Discussion section presented for each task separately.

The dissertation ends with conclusions and implications presented for each task and logically derived from them.

Contributions.

Dr. Atanasova defines 2 original contributions, 2 practically-applied contributions and 5 confirmatory contributions. I accept the contributions submitted by the dissertation student in the abstract.

Evaluation of the publications and personal participation of the doctoral student.

The author presents four full-text publications in connection with the dissertation/ one in IMAB, 2 in *Medinform* and 1 in *Scripta Scientifics Medicinæ Dentalis*/.

I believe that this scientific production is completely sufficient to confirm the importance of the dissertation work.

The personal participation of the doctoral student in the implementation of the dissertation research and the processing of the obtained results is indisputable.

Abstract.

The presented abstract fully reflects the dissertation in an abbreviated version. It is well structured and in terms of volume meets the accepted academic

requirements. The tables, diagrams and visualization figures presented in it provide complete information about the research conducted and the results obtained.

Critical notes and recommendations

There are no specific critical notes. I recommend Dr. Siyana Atanasova to publicize the results of her dissertation, aimed at pediatric dentists, general dental practitioners and parents alike.

I congratulate you on the chosen current topic. Without neglecting the importance of previous studies by Bulgarian authors on the subject, society is in debt to these children and dental doctors are an indispensable part of the process of protecting the oral health of these patients. With her knowledge and recommendations, the doctoral student could fill a gap in solving oral problems in children on the autism spectrum and some syndromes.

Conclusion

Dr. Siyana Atanasova has conducted purposeful, independent scientific research work and presents a dissertation with thematic relevance, sufficient volume of evidentiary material, as well as results with theoretical and practical significance. The proposed dissertation work shows that Dr. Atanasova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Pediatric Dentistry, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

The dissertation **contains scientific and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science**, and meets the requirements and criteria of the ZRASRB, the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the Ministry of Education - Varna.

Based on what is written above, I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the conducted research, presented in the dissertation work and **I propose to the honorable Scientific Jury to award the ONS "Doctor" to Dr. Siyana Georgieva Atanasova in the Doctoral Program in Pediatric Dentistry.**

03.05.2023 г.

Member of the Scientific Jury:

/Assoc. prof. dr. Mariana Dimitrova-Haruil, DMD, PhD/