

# REVIEW

of a dissertation work on the theme:  
**MODELS FOR HEALTH CARE AND WELFARE  
OF LONELY LIVING ELDERLY PEOPLE**

**of Ph.D. candidate: Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova,**

Assistant in the Medical University „Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov“ – Varna,  
„Health Care” Department, Branch – Veliko Tarnovo

**For awarding of educational and scientific degree Doctor  
in Higher Education Area 7. Health services and sports,  
professional field 7.4 Public health,  
scientific subject "Health care management"**

**Supervisors:**

**Professor Silvia Borisova, DrPH**

**associate professor Marinela Grudeva, PhD**

**Reviewer:** Professor Ivanichka Atanasova Serbezova, PhD, Health Care department of Public health and Health Care Faculty at the University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev“ – the town of Ruse

***1. Professional biography, career development and commitment to the theme of the dissertation research***

Assistant Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova graduated her basic education in Institute for training of health professionals with secondary education „Dr. Varban Genchev”, the town of Veliko Tarnovo and in 1994 – Medical College in the town of Pleven, specialty Nurse. From 2006 to 2011 acquired her educational qualification degree Bachelor and educational qualification degree Master in spe-

cialty: Health Care Management. In 2015, she graduated Master's program for Health Services Manager.

Assistant Markova started her professional development in 1988, as a nurse in surgical ward in Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment "Dr. Dimitar Pavlovich", the town of Svishtov. Until 2015 she has 27 years of practice as a nurse in different medical establishments in the town of Svishtov and the town of Veliko Tarnovo.

In the academic year of 2015/2016 she was appointed as an assistant in the Medical University „Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov“ – Varna, „Health Care” department, Branch – Veliko Tarnovo. Since her appointing up to the moment she has been carrying out clinical practice and educational and practical classes in disciplines, in conformity with the educational requirements, academic plan and academic curriculum of the Medical University– Varna.

She has successfully implemented in her teaching activity all the acquired competences by education and the direct work as a nurse.

She actively assists in the administrative and organisational activity of Veliko Tarnovo Branch. All this shows potential for scientific development and attitude towards academic research in the area of health care.

I believe that full commitment of the dissertation problematics with the professional and academic development of the Ph.D. candidate presents here.

## ***2. Administrative security of the procedure for dissertation defence***

Assistant Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova has been assigned doctoral studies for individual preparation to the Health Care department of Medical University – Varna, in accordance with an Order No P-109-637 of the Rector of Medical University – Varna of the 14 of November 2018, in individual form of education in doctoral program of „Health Care Management" in Higher Education Area 7. Health services and sports, professional field 7.4 Public health, with dissertation theme "Models for health care and welfare of lonely living elderly people " and supervisor Professor Silvia Borisova Dimitrova, Sc.D.

With an Order No P-109-191 of the Rector of Medical University – Varna of the 21 of May 2019, associate professor Marinela Ivanova Grudeva, PhD, has been appointed as the second supervisor.

Protocol for successfully taken doctoral exam in the specialty and in foreign language has been submitted. On the basis of a decision of the Chair Council of the Health Care department, regarding the readiness for public defence and a proposal for a Scientific Jury, Yanka Markova has been stricken off with the right of defence, in accordance with the Order No P-..... of the Rector of Medical University –Varna of the 27 of September 2019.

Record No 1 of 27.09.2019 from non-attendance meeting of the Scientific Jury shows the distraction for preparation of reviews and stands.

A set of materials, including the required documents has been presented in relation to the procedure:

- dissertation
- autoabstract
- declarations for originality, for authenticity of the documents presented for the defence
- copies of the scientific publications
- autobiography, diplomas, records, orders, etc.

The list of publications, related to the dissertation contains four of them. In one of them, Yanka Markova is an independent author, and the other three are in co-authorship. Two of the articles are in Bulgarian and two in Macedonian. The publications have been presented in full text to the documents for the defence. The same adequately reflect the production of dissertation research.

The author also presents two articles in print, where she is a leading author and also presents the work under the dissertation theme.

The autoabstract is a well-structured, synthesized presentation of the dissertation and contains all mandatory requisites for an autoabstract of dissertation. The most important parts of the dissertation content have been competently and profes-

sionally selected so that the autoabstract provides the complete idea of the concept, methodology, structure and results of the dissertation research.

The autoabstract, the professional biography and the list of articles, reflecting the dissertation research, have been published within the deadline in the specialized website of the Medical University – Varna, in compliance with the Act for Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of Academic Staff Development of the Medical University – Varna of 2018

### ***3. Characteristics of dissertation research***

#### ***3.1. Actuality of dissertation research***

The problems, related to human population dynamics, affect the whole world, not only Bulgaria. The UN warns of the irreversible demographic problems, related to the ageing of the world population, and Bulgaria is amongst the most ageing nations. The degree of ageing has no parallel in human history. The fact, on the one hand, that people live longer, is a result of the achievements in health services and feeding. On the other hand, in many countries, as our country is among them, the basic elements of social defence of their elderly citizens, as an income and *Health Care*.

It is the actuality of the observed topic, very well-founded by the author in the literal review, taking into consideration of contradictions and insufficient scientific development at the problem in our country, is the reason for determining the theme of proposals for reviewing the dissertation. Because it is undisputable that one serious problem such as the participation of the nurse in the care of elderly people, living alone, in which a professional interaction takes place and provides the opportunity for the nurses to perceive, analyse and apply what they have learned at the universities, deserves its detailed research. The chosen theme is relevant and forming a modern profile of the specialty of the regulated profession “Nurse”.

### ***3.2. Knowledge of the problematic by the Ph.D. candidate***

It is specified in the experience that Yanka Markova has that she has been working for many years in different wards, where patients of high risk were taken care of, most of them – elderly people. The experience that the assistant gain during this period, she is actively using in her teaching activity and since 2015 in her study work on the dissertation. It is obvious that the innovativeness of the research has forced the author to bravely approach the conceptual and methodological modelling, but also in a balanced manner at the same time. It is therefore explicable and logical when striding prior experiments and approaches to rely on broadly scientific basis, unifying views and researching results in the area of health medico-social theory and practice.

### ***3.3. Presence of researching problem (fitness for the dissertation)***

International experience for specialized nursing for elderly people living alone shows that the efforts of the medico-social striations is not sufficient. The activities in this direction are related to improving the effectiveness of the health services system, more targeted assistance, maintaining alternative organization for medical help and influencing the demographic situation. The problem of the role and the place of a nurse in these structures has been developed a lot during the recent years, but such researches with analogical focus and model of conceptualization were not known. At the same time, a number of similar, well-known research trials and achievements of implementing care for elderly and old people in the developed countries, are well known in general, as well as by the author and she manages to correctly present them in her dissertation. In Bulgaria the most popular is the traditional model of taking care for elderly people (care by the children for their parents and relatives at home). All this requires research of necessities, related to care giving of old people at home. The conceptually clarified formulation of the theme is properly treated in the content of the dissertation, and good example for this is the formulated and research defended purpose, goals, working hypothe-

sis, stages of the research work. Described in details is the experiment's design, as well as the methodology of research. The logical units for observation, the sources of information gathering and the methods used for the research have been precisely determined. The statistical methods for processing the received data have also been neatly provided.

All this gives me the grounds to accept with conviction that the chosen theme and the approach for its problematization in a research task are realistic, adequate, measurable and achievable.

### 3.4. *Dissertation structure*

The content is structured in five chapters with the relevant conclusions after each chapter, as the conclusions together with the recommendations and contributions are structured in a separate chapter. The contours of the methodological frame are set in second chapter, and the content in the three chapters is meaningful and evidently fulfils the methodological framework.

The total volume of the dissertation is 176 standard pages. The chapters as volume and content are well distributed in them: first chapter – 57 pages; second chapter – 14 pages; third chapter – 46, fourth chapter – 28 pages and fifth chapter contains conclusions, recommendations and contributions – 4 pages. There is logical commitment between all chapters, so the entire research follows a good methodology. The content of every chapter is accompanied by the necessary supporting material. The volume of the applications is 25 pages.

### 3.5. *Dissertation content*

While the methodological frame structures the dissertation, the content has been subordinated to the research dissertation.

The volume of the dissertation is 176 standard pages, including 10 tables and 65 figures. Applications – 9. 184 literature sources were quoted, 124 of them in Cyrillic, 44 in Latin. The literary reference is relatively up-to-date, as 55 of the

sources were published after 2009. The abbreviations were given in the beginning of the dissertations, which facilitates reading.

### **Literature review**

The literature review consists of 57 pages, structured in the first chapter. A few basic headings were traced in details. The biological and social aspects of ageing, terminology, concepts and problems have been reviewed. The needs that elderly people have for social and health cares have been presented in details and analytical. Particularly useful is the thorough study of the international experience in this area and the presentation of the best organisational models of medico-social assistance for adults. On the grounds of the literature review, it is founded that the activities directed towards the development of maximum opportunities is what matters, and they have to be accordingly the individual physical, mental and social needs of the patients with the aim to improve the quality of life and increase the independence of the old person.

For the development of the literature review, the author relies on sufficient number of sources, that she skilfully analyses and shows thorough knowledge of other author's opinions on the problem that she developing, as well as knowledge of the regulatory framework. The structure of the literature review and the stylistic presentation lead to the conclusion that assistant Yanka Markova is able to handle well literary sources and to express her own opinion on the theme of the dissertation.

### **Methodology and organisation of the study**

On the grounds of the thoroughly developed literature review and the conclusions made, the main objectives, goals, working hypothesis, stages, design, material and methods, the object and the scope of the research have been successfully derived. The methodology with stages of fulfilment of the research has been presented, as well as the methods of gathering the information and its processing. All this is precisely described.

## **Results**

Third and fourth chapter are devoted of an own research made. Demographic characteristic of the population of the district of Veliko Tarnovo has been made. The organisation of medico-social services in the district has been analysed, as well the welfare and the health of elderly people, living alone. An object of survey and analysis is the opinion of health professionals, regarding the quality of health care, provided at home for the population group that has been surveyed. The physical and the psychological and social needs of the elderly people in the researched region have been reviewed thoroughly and in details. The model of the experiment has been described, as well as the criteria for the inclusion of the two groups in it– non-experimental and experimental. The focus of chapter four is interesting, where the author presents her ***MODEL FOR PROVIDING HEALTH CARE AND WELFARE OF ELDERLY PEOPLE LIVING ALONE AT HOME.***

Analysing Bulgarian and international experience in providing care for elderly people living alone, as well as the forms of support and help, offered by a number of authors in our country, the author considers for appropriate to offer a Model for health care and welfare for elderly people living alone, as well as specific nursing documentation, following the state of elderly people at home. The proposed Model is a self-developed methodology, adapted to determining the quality of life regarding the offered medico-social services to old people and people living alone. It provides the opportunity for a qualitative assessment to be received and subsequent comparison to the user's opinion and the opinion of the health professionals. Besides the methodology in the model for evaluation of the health and quality of life of the elderly people, living alone, *strategies for providing help and support by a nurse have also been developed.* Practical benefit for the nurses shall also be *The practical steps for application of the Model for health care and welfare of elderly people living alone,* proposed by the author.

The conclusions to the whole dissertation, as well as the recommendations to the responsible institutions have been written with competence and synthesis. This

part of the dissertation from page 157 to page 159 is a theoretical summary of the methodology, the design decision procedural and results in support of the hypothesis of dissertation research and its contributions.

#### ***4. Contributions***

The results of the scientific research, the conclusions and recommendations formulated, outline contributions with theoretical and practical nature. The contribution report, presented in the dissertation, objectively shows the author's real achievements. From the contributions presented by the author, I accept the following:

##### ***Contributions of theoretical nature***

- The problem for providing medico-social assistance for elderly people living alone in the district of Veliko Tarnovo has been presented in details for the first time.
- A comprehensive health and social approach in providing care for increasing the health and the welfare of elderly people has been grounded.
- A research, related to the opinion of the health professionals and social workers regarding the organisation of medical and social assistance at home has been accomplished.
- The biological and psycho-social needs of elderly and old people in the absence of care at home have been identified.
- The different aspects of the quality of life of elderly people living alone in the district of Veliko Tarnovo have been studied in complex.
- Author's models for health care and welfare of elderly people living alone at home have been developed.

##### ***Contributions of practical and applied nature***

- Model for taking decisions upon planning the care for elderly people living

alone has been developed.

- The factors, having an effect over the development and fulfillment of the plan for nursing care at home have been identified.
- Information nursing card and protocol for nursing interventions have been developed as the guiding documents upon providing care at home.
- An author's model for care at home provided for elderly people, leading to increasing the quality of life has been approbated.
- Unified assessment of the needs of single living elderly people has been introduced, which expands the possibilities and the innovative approaches for home care optimization.

#### ***5. Recommendations and questions***

- A program for training students of the specialty of nurses and midwives on the grounds of the researches made with the aim to improve the effectiveness of training and increasing their competence in adults' care;
- To expand the filed of its publication activity in international magazines and collections.

I have no questions to the Ph.D. candidate.

#### ***6. Conclusion:***

***By giving a very good evaluation of the significant research in volume that has been made and the results achieved, I am offering with conviction to the Honourable Jury to confer the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ in scientific specialty: Health Care Management to Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova.***

***01.10.2019.***

***Reviewer:***

***Professor Ivanichka Serbezova, PhD***