**OPINION**

By Assoc. Prof. Despina Prodanova Georgieva, DEd

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Member of the Scientific Jury under Order No. P – 109-298/27.09.2019 of the Rector of Varna Medical University

**Regarding:** PhD thesis on:

**A Model for Health Care and Well-being of the Elderly Living on Their Own**

**Author**: **Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova**, assistant professor at Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University of Varna, Department of Health Care, Veliko Turnovo Subsidiary

**Supervisors:**

Prof. Silvia Borisova Dimitrova, PhD, DSc, Varna Medical University

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**Procedure information**: following an order by the Rector of Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University of Varna, № Р-109-637, dated 14-th November, 2018, Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova applied for a part-time PhD degree under the doctoral program Health Care Management in the field of Higher Education: - 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional field: 7.4. Public Health, on a subject: Models for Health Care and Wellbeing of the Elderly Living on Their Own. A protocol for successfully passing the doctoral exam in the major, and in a foreign language has been submitted. Based on a decision of the Department Council of the Department of Health Care regarding the readiness for public defence and the proposal for a Scientific Council, Yanka Markova was taken off, with the right of defence, in compliance with an Order by the Rector of Varna Medical University – Varna No. P – 109-298/27.09.2019

**Professional biography and career development**

Assistant professor Yanka Markova graduated from the Institute of Medical Professionals with specialised secondary education ‘Dr. Varban Genchev’ in Veliko Turnovo in 1988, with a major – nurse, in 1994 graduated from the Semi-higher Medical Institute of Pleven. Acquired a Bachelor’s degree in 2009, and in 2011, a Master’s degree in Health Care Management at Pleven Medical University. Finished a Master’s program in Health Care Management in 2015 at Gabrovo Technical University.

Her professional career begins in 1988 at the multi-profile hospital for active treatment in Svishtov as a nurse on the surgical ward, and later at the operating suite, the dialysis unit; she was a senior nurse on the surgical ward and the Intensive Care Unit. In 2012 she worked as a nurse in the Intensive Care Unit and the Orthopedics and Traumatology Unit at the ‚Stefan Cherkezov‘ multi-profile hospital for active treatment in Veliko Turnovo. She has been an assistant professor (since 2015- present) at Varna Medical University Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov’, Department of Health Care, Veliko Turnovo Subsidiary. Member of the Bulgarian Association of Health Care Professionals.

***Assistant professor Yanka Markova has carved out a successful professional career as a nurse, and later as a lecturer.***

**Theme Topicality**

The theme topicality of the present PhD thesis is determined by the demographic characteristics and the continuing tendency towards ageing of the population on a global scale. Ageing is accompanied by growing demands for long-term medical and social care. Poly-morbidity is typical of the elderly, and it involves impaired vital signs, partial or complete loss of the ability for self-service, movement, communication. The share of people with mental disorders, depression and dementia in Bulgaria is going up all the time, which necessitates complex care. The socio-economic processes in the country, the increased migration over the past years have a negative impact on the health and social issues of the growing number of the elderly who live on their own. The broken health and social well-being of the elderly who live on their own raise the need for providing qualified, long-term and complex nurse care.

**Structure and Characteristics of the PhD Thesis**

The PhD thesis encompasses five chapters, contains 176 pages, 10 tables, 65 figures and 9 enclosures. The literature used is from 184 sources, of which 121 are in Cyrillic, 51 in Latin, and 12 from Internet sources.

Chapter One, 60 pages, gives an overview of the literature and outlines the topicality and the significance of the issue studied by the PhD student. A sufficient number of sources in terms of volume and content have been analysed, to present the demographic characteristics of the population, the biological and social aspects of ageing, the modern views of ageing and old age. A profound analysis has been carries out of the organisational structures and models for providing care at home to the middle-aged and the elderly in a number of developed European countries, in countries in Eastern Europe, as well as in Turkey, Japan and the USA. An emphasis has been laid on the fact that a component of the quality of life of the middle-aged and the elderly is the accessibility to medical and social care as a complex of medical and social services, delivered to the patient at an advanced and old age at medical facilities and at home by a team of professionals – a doctor, a nurse, a social worker, a psychologist, etc. Tools for measuring and assessment of the quality – the most popular and most used on a massive scale general and specialised questionnaires have been submitted.

***The structure and the content of the information submitted in chapter One, make it clear that the PhD student is well acquainted with the subject matter of the problem under research, and skilfully synthesizes and analyses the scientific literature selected.***

Chapter Two, 13 pages, presents the methodology of the research, including aim, tasks, hypotheses, design of the experiment, stages of the study and methods of the research. The aim of the PhD research has been formulated clearly. Seven tasks have been presented for its accomplishment, precisely reflecting the research carried out by the PhD student. The design of the research, including the object, the subject and the scope has been correctly described. Clear criteria for selecting the patients in the experimental and control group have been pointed out. The stages of the research reflect the specific activities and the time frame of their accomplishment. A sufficient number of tools in terms of volume and content of proving the work hypotheses has been developed. An adequate and quite a rich set of sociological and statistical methods used to carry out accurate measurements and conclusions has been used.

In Chapter Three, 47 pages, the PhD student has presented a demographic characteristic and an organisation of the medical and social services in Veliko Turnovo District. A sociological survey of the quality of life and the possibilities to sustain the well-being of the middle-aged and the elderly has been carried out. The survey involves 400 middle-aged and elderly, of whom 300 users of medical and social care, and 100 elderly, living on their own. To determine the exact characteristics of the people under research, indicators have been included which allow a demographic analysis, a socio-economic analysis, physical and mental status. An assessment of the needs of the elderly has been made. Some health, social and psychological issues have been outlined which considerably worsen the quality of life and well-being of the people under research. Regarding the preferences for a model for providing care, over half of the polled have pointed out home care. The opinion of medical and non-medical specialists regarding the quality of medical care provided to the elderly at home has been studied. 200 medical professionals and social workers from the out-of-hospital, hospital and institutional care have been included in the survey. A large part of medical professionals thinks that they are well trained to provide home care to the elderly. In the opinion of the polled experts, the cooperation between the institutions is inefficient. Through observation, an age analysis was conducted on the biological and psycho-social needs of the middle-aged and the elderly in the absence of home care. The patients under observation represent different age groups, with various diagnoses and disease stages.

*The analysis of the results obtained allows an overall assessment of the condition of the long-term care in the district under observation, and the need for optimisation of the medical and social policy on the care of the middle-aged and elderly.*

The indicators of the efficiency assessment of the *Model for Health Care and well- being of the elderly living on their own* have been presented.

The research results have been appropriately visualised, and have been correctly and exhaustively interpreted. A program STATISTICA 8.0 Stat. Soft. Inc. и IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23 for the statistical processing has been used.

Chapter Four, in response to the proven necessity to optimise the long-term care and the introduction of a working model for home care, *A* *Model for Health Care and Well Being of the Elderly Living on Their Own* has been presented*.* The Model aims to improve the quality of life of the elderly living on their own by satisfying their disrupted biological and psycho-social needs. The Model proposed is a methodology developed by the PhD student, adapted to determining the quality of life in terms of offering medical and social services to the elderly and people living on their own. It allows a quality assessment and a follow-up comparison with the opinion of the user, and that of the medical professionals to be obtained. The significance of determining not only the need for care but also the predictions of possible standoffs and conflicts is great. The need for providing care at home by a well-trained team of competent professionals has been proven. The Respondents’ satisfaction with the care provided by the nurse, as well as the considerable change in health and well-being in (83%) of the elderly living on their own, is indicative enough of the efficiency and significance of the long-term care model.

Chapter Five formulates conclusions, recommendations and contributions.

**Recommendations and questions to the PhD student**:

I have no recommendations for the PhD student.

**Scientific and practical applied contributions:**

The present PhD research is characterised by originality and contribution. I accept the reference of the contributions, reflecting real accomplishments the way they have been systematised by the authoress, which can be synthesized in two main fields:

***Theoretical Contributions:***

* It is the first time the problem of providing medical and social care of the elderly living on their own in Veliko Turnovo District has been examined in detail.
* A complex health and social approach to providing care for improving the elderly's health and well-being has been substantiated.
* A study has been conducted on the opinion of medical professionals and social workers about the organisation of medical and social care at home.
* The biological and psycho-social needs of the middle-aged and the elderly in the absence of care at home have been identified.
* Various aspects of the quality of life of the elderly living on their own in Veliko Turnovo District have been studied comprehensively.
* Author’s models have been developed for health and well-being care of the elderly living on their own at home.

***Practical and applied contributions***

* A Model for providing health care and well-being of the elderly living on their own has been developed and officially approved.
* A Model of decision making for planning the care of the elderly living on their own has been developed.
* Factors affecting the development and fulfilment of the plan for nursing care at home have been identified.
* A nurse’s information card and a protocol for the nurse’s interventions as leading documents in providing care at home have been developed.
* A unified assessment of the needs of the elderly living on their own has been introduced to raise the possibilities and innovative approaches to optimising home care.

The positive results obtained contribute to the scientific development of the nursing profession and confirm that nurses in Bulgaria are ready for an autonomous activity within the team for providing long-term home care of the middle-aged and elderly.

**The recommendations and proposals in the PhD thesis** are based on the results obtained and are directed towards institutions on a national and regional level, as well as to the professional structures and organisations relevant to the unresolved issues in the field under research.

**The author’s summary of the** **PhD thesis** is structured following its chapters. The synthesized and well-selected text corresponds to the thesis's content. A list of four scientific publications has been submitted, related to the theme of the PhD thesis, published in magazines and proceedings of scientific conferences.

**Conclusion**

Yanka Markova’s PhD thesis treats a current issue of providing complex nursing care to the middle-aged and elderly at home to enhance their social activity and the quality of life of the patients. The aim of the PhD thesis has been achieved. The significant statistical results obtained prove the formulated hypotheses. The conclusions are clearly, accurately and exhaustively presented. The contributions accomplished, have not only scientific but also practical value. The publications submitted meet the requirements.

I give my most positive assessment and think that Yanka Georgieva Markova-Dimitrova’s PhD thesis meets all requirements for conferring the scientific and educational degree of ‘Doctor’.

September 29, 2019 Associate Professor Despina Georgieva, DEd