

STATEMENT OF OPINION

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Regarding PhD thesis for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional subfield 3.7. Administration and Management, Medical University - Varna

PhD candidate: Ivan Rumenov Todorov

PhD thesis: Patient satisfaction as a prerequisite for improving the quality of medical care and administrative services in the hospital

Grounds for preparing the opinion: participation in the scientific jury for the public PhD defence, according to the Order № P-109-567/09.12.2021 of the Rector of MU-Varna.

1. Information for the PhD candidate

The PhD candidate completed a doctoral program at the Department of Health and Economics and Management at the Faculty of Public Health of MU-Varna in the scientific specialty "Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Healthcare)", according to the Order № R- 109-103 / 21.02.2019 of the Rector of MU-Varna. The training was carried out in an independent form.

2. General characteristics of the PhD thesis

The subject of the PhD thesis is the factors and attitudes influencing patient satisfaction, the quality of medical care and administrative services. The total volume of the dissertation is 145 pages. The reviewed material includes an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. All together contain two tables and 33 figures. The reference list contains 132 sources, 27 are in Bulgarian, and 105 are in English. One internet address is specified. There are three applications.

The structure of the PhD thesis is logically correct. It is subordinated to the main research theses and is oriented towards achieving the goal by performing the set of research tasks.

The literature review uses mainly English language sources.

The PhD thesis has an optimal volume. The first and second chapters are prioritised. The illustrative material is sufficient - in terms of quantity and quality. The PhD thesis is based predominantly on empirical material and legislation from the last few years.

The research topic is up-to-date regarding the challenges posed by the specifics of health care and its unique significance for society. The transformation of the environment, the development of health care, new communication channels, and patient requirements create a new reality that poses a considerable challenge for health professionals and management of the health care establishments. All this is in the context of increasing the competitiveness and development of hospitals in the country.

The topic and the research problem connect health care, administrative services, technology, quality, satisfaction, environment, competitiveness, efficiency.

The introduction contains general statements and **the topicality of the research**. **The conceptual framework** is presented by defining **the object and subject** of the study, **the purpose and tasks** of the research, **the research theses**, methods, and limitations. At this stage, the clarity and argumentation of the concepts and ideas defended by the author are evident. The essence of the PhD thesis can be easily highlighted, namely - analysis and assessment of satisfaction, derivation of its determinants, optimisation of activities, development and implementation of tools to increase satisfaction with medical care and administrative services.

3. Evaluation of the scientific and applied results

The development of technology, environmental change, and the patients' requirements determine new opportunities for the provision of health services. This implies significant challenges for hospital management and requires further knowledge of technologies, processes, methods and models.

The first chapter examines the statements about patient satisfaction with the hospitals. The relationship between the quality of medical care, administrative services and satisfaction has been established. Basic concepts have been determined, including personalised medicine, experience, continuity of medical care, patient satisfaction. The need for the measurement of patient satisfaction has been analysed. The quantitative and qualitative assessments have been differentiated, the subjectivity of the assessment

is emphasised, as well as the fact that the patients do not have the competence to assess the quality of the treatment. The factors influencing patient satisfaction have been studied: medical equipment, technologies, innovations, communications, qualification and competencies of the medical staff, administrative services, image, etc.

Further, good practices for achieving patient satisfaction are examined in the literature review. Examples from hospitals in the United States and Europe are presented. Specific approaches used by leading medical institutions to improve medical care and patient satisfaction have been analysed. In the end, some conclusions are made about factors influencing patient satisfaction.

The second chapter is focused on the study of patient satisfaction in Bulgaria. The analysis begins with establishing satisfaction in a demographic context. The next is a study of the factors for choosing a medical institution, the communication channels used and the sources of information. The emphasis on communications is in a detailed study of the type, impact, effectiveness and satisfaction of communication channels used by the MC "Dr Shterev". The medical care provided by the health personnel has been similarly studied and evaluated. The factors influencing patient satisfaction are prioritised - quality, service, physical environment.

The position of health managers is presented after the patient views. They are related to the priorities of the medical institutions, the patients' acquisition, the ranking of factors for patient satisfaction. In this context, the analysis related to some discrepancies between health management and physicians regarding satisfaction is of interest.

The study among the physicians is in a similar direction with its specifics. The emphasis in their assessment is the choice of attending physician and the factors that determine satisfaction. The observed "contradiction" between patient satisfaction and the medical outcome is of fundamental importance.

The third chapter is oriented towards the application of the empirical results. This chapter contains summaries and recommendations to increase patient satisfaction. The specific measures and activities are in several directions: improving the organisation of work; administrative and non-medical services; communication with patients; staff motivation; medical infrastructure; the physical environment of the medical institution.

Summaries and conclusions are made at each stage of the research. A significant

volume of information has been correctly processed, analysed and evaluated. A study has been conducted. The structure of the questions is correct and appropriate for gathering information to objectify dependencies and draw conclusions.

The research goals and objectives have been sufficiently fulfilled.

4. Assessment of the scientific and applied contributions

In general, the PhD thesis has merits, which allows defining scientific and applied contributions.

1. A literature review of scientific publications on patient satisfaction has been conducted.
2. Good practices of leading healthcare institutions have been presented.
3. A survey among patients, managers, administrators and medical staff was conducted. The results have been interpreted.
4. Summaries, conclusions and recommendations have been made regarding the opportunities to increase patient satisfaction.

I consider the summary of the contributions in the author's abstract to be an accurate reflection of the PhD thesis achievements, with some remarks on the second one (the third and fourth can be combined).

5. Assessment of the publications on the PhD thesis

The list of publications includes eight titles: articles - 4, all of the individual, in Bulgarian; reports - 4, one of which is co-authored, and two are in English. They are on the topic of the dissertation and reflect essential parts of it.

6. Assessment of the PhD thesis abstract

The PhD thesis abstract meets the requirements and adequately reflects the main points of the overall content. The dissertation and the abstract are correct in terms of structure and content.

7. Critical remarks, recommendations and questions

There are no significant gaps in the conceptual framework of the PhD thesis. Some critical remarks and recommendations:

- The third thesis can be clarified.
- The first chapter is too voluminous. The parts on good practice are descriptive and can be optimised.
- In the second chapter, there are some inconsistencies between the structure and

the content.

- Technical inaccuracies have been made.

Setting the primary thesis and accompanying hypotheses in such studies is appropriate.

- It would be good at the end of the dissertation to interpret the thesis set out in the introduction.

The remarks made do not underestimate the achievements and are intended to support the future work of the PhD candidate.

My question is related to one of the identified problems, namely the "contradiction" between patient satisfaction and medical outcome. How to overcome this?

8. Conclusion

The dissertation is conscientious scientific-applied research in a field of significant relevance.

I find that the formulated goal and tasks have been achieved. Scientific and applied contributions can be defined as real achievements of the PhD candidate. All this is a reason to give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation and recommend to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to award Ivan R. Todorov with the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

11.01.2022 Varna

Member of the scientific jury:

/Assoc. Prof. D. Dobrev, PhD/

