

STANDPOINT

BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR KRISTINA PETROVA ZAHARIEVA,
RUSE UNIVERSITY “ANGEL KANCHEV”

Faculty of Public Health and Health Care
on the dissertation of Petya Georgieva Krumova
under the title

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDED BY NURSES
TO ELDERLY AND OLDER PEOPLE

Scientific supervisors

Assoc. Prof. Emiliya Georgieva, PHD

Assoc. Prof. Veselina Slavova, PhD

For the purpose of awarding the educational and scientific degree of “PhD” in Higher education area: 7. Healthcare and Sport, Professional field 7.4. Public health and scientific specialty: Health care management.

Procedure data

Ms **Petya Georgieva Krumova**, under the order No. P-109-207 dated 12.05.2022 by the Rector of Medical university “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – town of Varna, was enrolled as a doctoral candidate in independent study course of Doctoral Programme of Health care management, Health Care Department at Sliven Affiliate of the Medical University – Varna, to acquire the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in Higher education area: 7. Healthcare and Sport, Professional field 7.4. Public health and scientific specialty: Health care management.

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense to the Departmental Council in the Health Care Department at Sliven Affiliate of the Medical University – Varna on 29.11.2023. Under order No. P-109-52 dd 15.02.2024 by the Rector of MU-Varna and minutes of meeting No.82/12.02.2024 Ms Petya Krumova was dematriculated and entitled with the right of defense.

I present this standpoint in my capacity as a member of Scientific Jury elected and voted by Academic Board of Medical University – Varna (MoM No. 82/12.02.2024) and appointed under order No. P-109-52 dd 15.02.2024 by the Rector of Medical University – Varna to hold a procedure for defense of dissertation titled “Ethical aspects of the health care provided by nurses to elderly and older people”. According to MoM No.1/26.02.2024 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I was appointed to prepare a standpoint on the dissertation.

The set of materials submitted on soft and hard copy has been prepared in accordance with the Development of Academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and Regulations on Academic Staff Development at Medical University – Varna.

Education and training

After completion of her basic medical education, specialty “Nurse” at Trakia University - Medical College in 2000, *Petya Krumova* continued her professional development and training in a sustainable manner. In 2006 she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Health Care at the Higher Medical Institute – Plovdiv, a Master's degree in 2009 in Defense and Security Economics at the University of National and World Economy – Sofia, and a Master's degree in 2014 in Health Care Management at the Medical University of Sofia.

Professional realization

From 2000 to 2008 she worked as a perioperative nurse at University Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment – Stara Zagora EAD. In the period 2008-2014 she worked as a Senior nurse in Operating room at UMHAT EAD. From 2014 to 2018 she was a lecturer at Medical College of Trakia University, Stara Zagora. Then continued her professional development at Trakia Hospital Ltd. – Stara Zagora as a Senior nurse in Operating Room. From 2019 to 2021 she was a part-time Health Care lecturer at the Medical College of Trakia University – Stara Zagora and since October 2021 she has been a Health Care lecturer at the Medical College of Trakia University – Stara Zagora.

The academic development of Petya Krumova was initiated in 2014 and continues up to date as a doctoral student in independent study course at Sliven Affiliate of the Medical university “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna, Department of Health Care.

By Order No. P-109-207 as of 12.05.2022. *Petya Krumova* was enrolled as a candidate in independent study course under the Doctoral Programme of Health Care Management at Health Care Department – Sliven Affiliate of the Medical university “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.

The PhD student teaches classes in the academic disciplines of Health Care and Clinical Practice. Her numerous participations in projects, scientific events and various forms of continuing education have been evidence of Petya Krumova's permanent striving for professional development and improvement; she uses English and Russian.

Characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation developed by *Petya Krumova* is 146 pages in length, includes 11 tables, 52 figures and 3 appendices, all representing the standard structure for the professional field: introduction, first chapter “Literature review”; second chapter “Objective, tasks, methodology and organization of the study”; third chapter “Results of own research”; fourth chapter “Model for introduction of ethical nursing care in a home for elderly people”; conclusion; opinions; suggestions; contributions; bibliography and appendices. The content is relevant to the topic and reflects the outcomes of the research carried out. The bibliographical reference contains 173 titles, of which 54 - in Bulgarian, 2 - in Russian, 105 - in Latin and 12 webpages. The literature sources, which were used, correspond to the topical focus and are accurately cited as required.

The dissertation “Ethical aspects of the health care provided by nurses to elderly and older people” proposed for defense, is the aftermath of Petya Krumova's long and purposeful work as a teacher and researcher.

Assessment of topic relevance

Petya Krumova's dissertation deals with a topical problem related to the disclosure of how important the ethical aspects of health care provided by nurses for elderly and older people are.

The focus of the dissertation research is the transformation of the patients from objects of health care into active subjects – i.e. they are able to actively participate in the process of health care planning and implementation, and to make decisions about their own health. The main ethical challenges upon health care delivery relate to the respecting the autonomy of patients, equity upon provision of treatment and respecting their dignity and life quality, as well as use of resources. The relevance of the chosen topic is a bit more supported by the factor of “ageing population” not only in Bulgaria, but also worldwide, a population with increasing care needs against the background of limited personnel resources. The chosen topic is thesisable and allows some reasoned conclusions to be drawn, proposals to be made and contributory aspects to be formulated.

In the introduction the social, scientific and practically applicable significance of the investigated problem is presented, and the relevance of the chosen topic is well substantiated.

Literature review

Structurally, the literature review includes 7 parts dedicated to different aspects of the problem under research. The doctoral student provides analytical review of the literature by historically considering the “Ethics of Care”, participation, role and functions of the nurse in the organization and provision of care to the elderly and older people. Also included is the international experience upon organizing and providing care to older people. In a logical sequence, Petya Krumova describes the ethical codes in nursing for the care of elderly and older people; the code of professional ethics for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals in Bulgaria; the code of the American Nurses Association; the code of professional conduct for nurses in the United Kingdom and the common points in the ethical codes in nursing. The experience and knowledge of the PhD student contribute to a thorough analysis of the care provided to elderly people in different countries and Bulgaria in specialized institutions for short-term or long-term care. Coordination between the structures of the current system upon organization of care for elderly and older people in Bulgaria has been outlined. On the basis of researches conducted in various countries, some issues are highlighted in the ethical, educational and psychosocial tendencies responsible for the difficulties upon providing care to elderly patients.

The well-structured literature review and bibliographic reference demonstrate the good knowledge of the doctoral student in the area researched and her deep insight in the issues of the dissertation.

Methodology and organization of the study

In second chapter *Petya Krumova* has presented the purpose, tasks, methodology and organization of the study. The main target is precisely and clearly stated: “To investigate, study, analyze and evaluate the ethical aspects of health care provided by nurses to the elderly and older people, according to the demographic situation in the country and the medical and social problems in geriatrics”. There are five correctly formulated tasks, the fulfillment of which shows the research work carried out by *the doctoral student*. 3 working hypotheses are set. The methodology of the study organization – subject, object, scope, stages, methods, criteria, indicators and instrumentaria – is presented in details.

The study includes 303 respondents divided into three groups:

I group – 55 practicing nurses in health care institutions for elderly and older people in Stara Zagora district.

II group – 100 persons aged over 65 accommodated in these institutions providing health care for elderly and older people.

III group – 148 third- and fourth-year students, specialty "Nurse" from MU-Varna, Sliven affiliate, Trakia University in Stara Zagora and Haskovo affiliate.

Documentary, sociological and statistical methods were used in the study. In order to achieve the research objectives the PhD student developed and applied three questionnaire cards: No.1 – investigating the opinion of medical professionals working in institutions providing health care to elderly and older people (25 questions); No.2 – investigating the opinion of elderly people living in institutions, with regard to their health condition, life in the institution and the extent of their satisfaction with the cares provided (11 groups of questions with sub-questions); and No.3 – investigating the opinion of 3rd- and 4th-year students of the specialty “Nursing” about their attitudes and desire to work with elderly and older people, as well as their preparation in the university for working with this age group (21 questions).

The study was conducted independently in four main stages: researching the relevance of the problem; preparing the study; conducting the study and finalizing the dissertation.

The questionnaire survey was held after approval by the Research Ethics Committee at the Medical University, Varna (by Resolution No.123/15.12.2022) in February, March and April 2023.

The PhD student represents the results of her own survey and their discussion **in chapter three** of the dissertation.

The third chapter reveals the actual state of the problem in practice, provides the results obtained from the fact-finding study. An in-depth analysis of data and discussion of the outcome from the questionnaire survey made among nurses working in institutions caring for elderly and older people; among users of services offered in institutions for elderly and older people; among third- and fourth-year students with “Nurse” specialty regarding their attitudes and willingness to work with elderly and older people, as well as their preparation at university to work with such age group. Theoretical, mathematical and statistical processing of the empirical data and their interpretation is presented. The obtained results and their discussion fully meet the hypotheses, objective and tasks set by the PhD student. The tabular and graphical illustration contribute to easier perception of the presented data. The statement of the data collected and its discussing represent the ability of the doctoral student to report it correctly, to apply appropriate analysis methods and to interpret the results thoroughly.

The fourth chapter contains a “Model introducing ethical nursing care in homes for old people”. The PhD student highlights a number of benefits should the model be integrated into practice, such as “improved quality of health care, better coordination of health services, more efficient use of resource, better communication at all levels among staff members, personnel contentment, patient satisfaction on behalf of older individuals and their relatives, job satisfaction and increased motivation on the part of health care professionals”.

The contributory part of the dissertation consists of contributions of theoretical and cognitive nature and contributions of practical and applicable nature. The contributions in the dissertation enrich scientific knowledge and support practice.

Dissertation contributions

Of theoretical and cognitive nature

An in-depth comparative analysis of Bulgarian and foreign literature sources and regulatory documents revealing the importance of ethical aspects of health care for the elderly and older people has been carried out.

An in-depth analysis is made about the care for elderly and older people accommodated in institutions on the territory of Stara Zagora region.

The main reasons for accommodation in institutions providing care for elderly and old people are analyzed.

Of practical and applicable nature

The elaboration of “Model introducing ethical nursing care in homes for old people” bears high practical value to ensure competent and qualitative care: to increase the quality of health care provided, to upgrade professional skills, to optimize the learning process, to form skills and competencies in students to provide care of better quality to elderly and older people.

The questionnaires developed to assess the individual needs and health status of older persons in nursing homes have high practical value for the adequate planning of health care.

The postgraduate education of nurses on topical issues related to the geriatric care is of great importance so to improve the qualification of practicing nurses and to upgrade their professional skills.

Based on the results of the study performed, literature analysis and international experience, seven conclusions were formulated that show the implementation of the study set tasks in a synthesized form.

I do not have any questions and comments to ask the doctoral student, but only a recommendation – to keep working on the chosen topic, publish a monograph and prepare in an appropriate form some informational materials designed to enhance the qualifications of nurses working in institutions providing care to elderly and older people, and to improve the professional competencies of students, specialty *Nurse*.

Further to the dissertation the doctoral student submitted two publications, one of which is co-authored.

The dissertation is written in good language, precise in terminology. The appendices include questionnaire cards used in the course of the study.

The structure of the abstract meets the generally accepted requirements. The contents of the dissertation are fully and accurately reflected. The most significant results and relationships revealed, as well as the conclusions, contributions, and recommendations of the study are stated.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation “Ethical aspects of the health care provided by nurses to elderly and older people” shows a thorough in-depth knowledge of the studied matter by the doctoral student. I appreciate the importance and relevance of the dissertation topic. Upon development of the dissertation the PhD student has demonstrated skills upon applying the methodology of scientific and research work, which is one of the objectives of doctoral training. The conducted research meets the tasks set.

On the grounds of the foregoing, I give my positive vote with full conviction and objectivity and recommend the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree of “PhD” for the scientific specialty “Health care management” in Higher education area: 7. “Healthcare and Sport”, professional field 7.4. “Public health”, to **Petya Georgieva Krumova**.

24. 04. 2024

Ruse

Assoc. Prof. Kristina Zaharieva, PhD

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