

REVIEW

Assoc. Prof. NEVYANA GEORGIEVA FESCHIEVA, MD, PhD

About the dissertation work of **Iskra Staneva Kapincheva, MD** on the topic:

COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE - DEVELOPMENT AND PLACE IN
THE BULGARIAN HEALTHCARE

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Desislava Vankova, MD, MPH, PhD

For awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", field of higher education 7. "Health and sport", scientific direction 7.1 "Medicine", Scientific specialty: 03.01.53. "Social medicine and the organization of health care and pharmacy."

By order № P 109-556 / 01.12.2020г. of the Rector of MU-Varna I have been appointed as an external member of a scientific jury to present a review of the dissertation of Dr. Iskra Staneva Kapincheva on "Complementary and alternative medicine - development and place in Bulgarian health care" for awarding educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy", professional field 7.1. Medicine, field of higher education 7. Health and sports.

Brief biographical data about the doctoral student:

Born in Varna in 1963. She graduated from the IV French Language High School "Fr. Joliot-Curie"-Varna. Dr. Kapincheva graduated with a Master's degree in medicine at the Medical University of Varna in 1988. She worked as a therapist at the Outpatient medical center in Dulgopol (1988-1995). From 1995 to 2008 she was Chief Expert at the National Center for Public Health - Sofia with the position of Head of the Museum of History of Medicine, Varna. Since 2004 she has been practicing homeopathy, which since 2008 has been her main professional occupation. He has a degree in Social Medicine and Health Management (1999). Graduated doctor - homeopath with diplomas from: CEDH - Bulgaria; MU - Sofia; European Committee for Homeopathy. He is constantly working for improvement in the field of homeopathy and naturopathy. She has completed seminars and courses in various countries - Greece, Israel, Germany, etc., has certificates in energy psychology, as well as completed a course in medical qigong at the International University of Traditional Chinese Medicine - Tianjin, China. She has not severed ties with the medical-historical community and takes part in its events. He has extensive experience as a lecturer in classical homeopathy and Schussler therapy at the German Homeopathic Union and at the Center "Edicta" - Sofia. She is a member of the Association of Homeopathic Doctors in Bulgaria; the political subcommittee of the European Committee for Homeopathy; of the National Society for the History of Medicine; a member of the European Society of Integrative Medicine in Bulgaria, as well as of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

General characteristics of work

The dissertation presented by Dr. Iskra Kapincheva contains 130 pages, is illustrated with 2 tables and 14 figures. The used bibliographic sources are 232, of which 97 are in Cyrillic and 135 are in Latin.

The dissertation is well structured in seven main parts: Introduction, Chapter I - Literary Review; Chapter II - Purpose, tasks and methodology of the study; Chapter III - CAM in the Bulgarian healthcare. Results from own research and discussion; Chapter IV - Conclusions, Recommendations, Contributions; References; Applications.

The relevance of the topic is related to the growing interest in non-traditional methods and in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), supported by international documents. As early as 1999, the European Parliament focused on unconventional methods of prevention and therapy. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Commission (EC) are urgently raising the issue of seeking evidence for the effectiveness of CAM. In the national context, Bulgaria lacks socio-demographic and epidemiological data on the supply and demand of CAM in our country. At the same time, folk medicine and naturopathy have long traditions, which are now legally regulated (since 2005), but not sufficiently studied.

CAM has its place in European and Bulgarian healthcare. Research, such as that presented by Dr. Kapincheva, related to CAM approaches and research on the effectiveness, efficiency and safety of CAM methods are timely and necessary.

In her introduction, Dr. Iskra Staneva Kapincheva convincingly substantiates the relevance and importance of the chosen topic.

The literature review shows the exceptional competence and depth of the doctoral student in the field of CAM.

It outlines and examines CAM in its multidimensionality and multilayeredness:

- CAM-concept - theoretical research - basic concepts and definitions;
- Types of CAM, according to the framework of the European project CAMbrella, are presented in detail as the essence, historical development and current state - acupuncture; anthroposophical medicine; Ayurveda; yoga; kinesiology; naturopathy; osteopathy; reflexology; Tibetan medicine; Traditional Chinese medicine; phytotherapy; chiropractic; homeopathy; shiatsu.
- Unifying features / approaches for all CAM methods.
- Research in the field of CAM - a brief overview and justification of the growing need for more detailed analysis and research for each specific method.

The literature review is extremely interesting, well structured in four parts and critically presented by the doctoral student. This gives her a basis for developing a perfectly substantiated and illustrated methodology, through which she carried out her own research.

Methodology: The methodology of the study was developed in three phases. A converging parallel mix-method design is applied, which consists of three separate parallel phases with equal priority, the data of which are subsequently integrated to be interpreted and to draw conclusions and recommendations at the end of the study.

In the first phase, the historical, international and national CAM context is presented and analyzed.

The second phase of the study covers quantitative analysis through our own observational multicenter study. Quantitative data were collected using a survey method through a toolkit - a standardized questionnaire for subjective health assessment, EQ-5D-3L.

The third phase involves a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews, where the target population is parents who have chosen the homeopathic method for the treatment of their children.

The aim and objectives of the dissertation are properly formulated and well justified. The specific scientific tasks, the object, the units and the signs of the observation are related to the specificity of the development. Adequately selected methods are used, which complement each other and allow for a comprehensive assessment of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). An own survey was conducted.

The aim of this dissertation is to study the historical and scientific development of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), and its place in Bulgarian healthcare with an emphasis on homeopathy as the most common CAM method in Europe.

The planned objectives fully correspond to the general research goal:

First objective: To define, study and present the innovative European concept CAM and its place in the Bulgarian healthcare.

Second objective: To outline the CAM approaches on a national scale and to study the historical and scientific development of the types of CAM therapies in Bulgaria.

Third objective: To make a situational analysis of CAM in the Bulgarian healthcare, including a classic SWOT analysis based on the studied world and European experience.

Fourth objective: Study of the socio-demographic profile and health-related results of patients with chronic complaints who have been treated for more than a year with homeopathy - the most common CAM method in Europe. Tracking attitudes and awareness related to homeopathy.

Fifth objective: To study the reasons for the choice of homeopathy in the treatment of children.

The results of the research are grouped into seven dimensions, giving a comprehensive CAM portrait and clear guidelines for the future development of CAM. These dimensions are as follows:

- Legislation in Bulgaria;
- SWOT analysis of the state of CAM in Bulgaria;
- CAM-methods in Bulgaria - history and present;
- Results of own quantitative research in the field of homeopathy;
- Results of own qualitative research in the field of homeopathy;
- Discussion of the conducted own researches;
- Place of CAM in the Bulgarian healthcare - integration and interpretation of the scientific results.

The comprehensive quantitative study confirms the need for more scientific information about homeopathy, but also in general about the priority of scientific approaches to CAM.

The analysis of the presented own researches and conclusions in the field of homeopathy leads to the formation of the following approaches:

- 1) broader understanding and social promotion of homeopathy as CAM in Bulgaria;
- 2) greater appreciation of the importance of evidence-based homeopathy for public health;
- 3) growing interest in the use of quality of life assessment tools as patient-reported outcomes in the monitoring of therapies for chronic conditions, including CAM and in particular homeopathy.

The conclusions of the study logically follow from the analysis of research results. Dr. Kapincheva draws conclusions that correspond to the five tasks set in the study. The following development strategies are outlined:

- **Collaborative strategy** - joint work of CAM specialists from the practice with scientists united in a common cause: search for scientific evidence for the mechanisms of action, in support of the efficiency, effectiveness, safety of CAM; for the benefit of patients and people who want to lead an environmentally friendly and healthy lifestyle.
- **Communication strategy** - The communication strategy is key to the correct, unified and comprehensive presentation of the CAM concept in society. With regard to target groups, the communication strategy should be differentiated as specialized (targeted at the professional class) and aimed at increasing people's health literacy (targeted at the whole society). The messages must be correct, scientifically sound and understandable.
- **Constructive strategy** - building or upgrading a sustainable, stable and developing CAM, as part of the overall structure of health care in Bulgaria.

The Short version to the dissertation fully reflects the structure of the development and contains the most important results and conclusions of the study.

In connection with the topic of the dissertation there are three publications and three participations in scientific and educational forums, including international ones, which are related to the topic of the dissertation. I welcome the publication in an internationally peer-reviewed journal with an impact factor (BMC Public Health, IF: 3.275), which is important for the visibility of scientific results among academia. In this regard, the fact that Dr. Kapincheva has a profile in the global science platforms: ResearchGate and Google scholar is also important.

Personal impressions and recommendations:

I have witnessed the professional development of Dr. Kapincheva. Socially engaged, undoubtedly very well theoretically prepared, strong person with innovative spirit and independent thinking, she is logically oriented towards unconventional and insufficiently developed topics for Bulgaria. He works with real inspiration, probably because he loves what he does. I am convinced that Dr. Kapincheva will not stop here. I also wish her successful development as a doctor, a teacher and a researcher.

Conclusion

The dissertation of Iskra Staneva Kapincheva on the topic: "Complementary and alternative medicine - development and place in the Bulgarian healthcare" is a pioneer in the research of unconventional methods in our country. A road is being paved for further medical, social and clinical studies in the CAM area. The presented development covers the requirements of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of MU-Varna for its implementation.

In connection with all the above, I give my positive assessment and strongly recommend the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty 03.01.53 "Social Medicine and Organization of Health and Pharmacy" by Dr. Iskra Staneva Kapincheva.

09.02.2021

Reviewer:



/Assoc. Prof. N. Feschieva, MD, PhD/