

## OPINION

by

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Member of the Scientific Jury pursuant to Order № P-109-556/01.12.2020 of the Rector of Medical University of Varna.

*Regarding:* Defense of Dissertation Thesis by Iskra Staneva Kapincheva, PhD student at the Department of Social Medicine and Health Care Organization on the subject «Complementary and alternative medicine – development and position in Bulgarian Health Care» in order to obtain Scientific Degree "PhD" in higher education area 7. Health and Sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Care and Pharmacy Organization".

The Dissertation Thesis has been approved and directed to public defense after being presented at a meeting of the Department council (Protocol №10/ 29.10.2020r), according to the requirements of the the Rules for Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" - Varna.

### **Brief Career and Qualifications profile of the PhD student**

Iskra Kapincheva graduated in 1981 from IV Language school «Frederic Joliot-Curie», while in 1988 she earned her MD degree from Medical University. Further, she obtained «Social Medicine and Health Management» specialty.

Dr. Kapincheva started her professional career as district physician in the Polyclinic of the town of Dalgopol, where she worked between 1988 and 1995. After that, until 2008, she held the position of expert at the National Centre of Public Health in Sofia. In parallel with her expert duties, dr. Kapincheva administers very successfully the Museum on History of Medicine in Varna.

Dr. Iskra Kapincheva began her activity as homeopathic therapist in 2004, when she started her own homeopatic practice.

Dr. Kapincheva has acquired various specializations and attended several courses in Bulgaria and abroad, the major part of these being in the field of homeopathy, as well as other systems and therapies related to Complementary and alternative medicine. In addition to the trainings attended, during this period, she participates in teaching of classic homeopathy and Schuessler therapy at the German homeopathic union.

She is member of professional, scientific and non-governmental organizations: Association of the homeopathic therapists in Bulgaria; European Homeopathic Committee; European Integrative Medicine Community; Union of the Scientists in Bulgaria; National Association on History of Medicine; Society «Public Health -99», etc.

## **General characteristic of the Dissertation Thesis**

The Dissertation Thesis presented by dr. Iskra Kapincheva is with proportions and in format meeting the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff and the Rules for Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" - Varna. It is printed on 130 standard pages, aided by 2 tables and 14 figures. The cited references consist of 232 entries – 97 in Cyrillic, 135 in Latin. A quarter of all the references have been printed in the last 5 years.

## **Assessment of the structural parts of the Dissertation Thesis**

The literature review is written on 20 pages in high academic style with accurate terminology utilization. It presents the relevance of the subject and the position of Bulgaria in the European innovative concept - Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). There has been an increasing worldwide interest towards CAM, which plays an important role in the economic development of several countries, reducing health expenditures and accumulating evidence on its positive effects, while at the same time, the information on this subject in Bulgaria is extremely scarce. In this line, the topic selected for the Dissertation Thesis is unarguably relevant in the context of investigating the situation and the perspectives for CAM in Bulgaria. At the beginning of the presentation, the PhD student, by introducing the main terms, has unified the definitions in this, relatively new for Bulgaria, area. The other significant part of the literature review is the alphabetical listing of the various kinds of CAM in Europe with the details about their historical development and current status

The objective of the Dissertation Thesis has been clearly defined, corresponding to the subject and the content of the supporting studies, namely – *research on the historical and scientific development of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), as well as its position in Bulgarian Health Care, with main focus on homeopathy, being the method spread mostly in Europe*. In order to achieve the objective, as formulated above, the PhD student has defined 5 tasks, aimed at identifying of the CAM concept and its position in Bulgarian Health Care; studying of the opinion and the awareness, related to homeopathy among patients with chronic conditions, as well as the reason for resorting to homeopathy as main CAM-therapy for treatment of children in Bulgaria.

The presented hypotheses reflect the profound knowledge and the long-term experience of the PhD student in the field of Cam-therapies.

The methodology of the Dissertation Thesis includes converging parallel mix-method design, by which dr. Iskra Kapincheva utilizes very accurately the simultaneous or consecutive application of qualitative and quantitative methods for the purpose of better understanding of the researched topic and for formulating of conclusions and recommendations at the end of the text. All the studies are clearly described and visualized in tables and/or graphs.

By means of the *SWOT-analysis*, dr. Kapincheva brings out the environmental factors, having potential to facilitate or suppress the existence and the expansion of the CAM-therapies in Bulgaria: spread of chronic diseases, antibiotic resistance, prevention of diseases, ageing of population, palliative care. The global and the national threats affecting CAM have been described in detail. At the second stage, the strong and the weak

sides of CAM in Bulgaria have been analyzed. The PhD student defines, at the end of the analysis, 3 strategies for application and development of CAM in Bulgaria.

While conducting *historical and medical study* of the CAM-methods in Bulgaria with reference to the framework adopted in the European CAMbrella project, dr. Kapincheva adjusts for the national specifics and outlines the most common treatment methods, incl. the popular in Bulgaria, Traditional medicine, Phytotherapy and Intermittent Fasting.

*The quantitative study* in the field of homeopathy among 211 patients with chronic conditions, who had received homeopathic therapy for at least one year and who had been monitored for the study period through their visits to homeopathic clinics, was conducted by means of the EQ-5D-3L instrument and a questionnaire about the demographic characteristics. On the basis of the obtained results, the PhD student established the social and demographic profile of the homeopathic patients with chronic conditions and the main reasons for selecting of homeopathic treatment in Bulgaria.

The results from *the qualitative study* among 35 parents reveal the factors for taking of decision by parents to use CAM for their children and underline the importance of the continuous contact with the therapists and the trust in them.

The final conclusions are clearly formulated and correspond to the hypothesis and the tasks set up in the Dissertation Thesis. The contributive value of the Thesis is indisputable. I fully accept the original and practically implemented contributions.

The resume is structured according to the commonly accepted requirements and reflects the synthesized content of the Dissertation Thesis.

Three full-text papers related to the subject of the Dissertation Thesis has been included – one of them was published in an international journal with high Impact-factor, while the other two - in Bulgarian journals. The PhD student had the results of the studies presented also at two international and one national scientific venues.

### **Conclusion**

On the grounds of the overall analysis of the Dissertation Thesis and the correlated scientific and research activities, as well as the practical contributions, the professional development and the scientific achievements of the PhD student, I, hereby, express my *positive* opinion and propose to the members of the Scientific Jury to award dr. Iskra Staneva Kapincheva with the educational and scientific degree “PhD” in higher education area 7. Health and Sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine in the scientific specialty “Social Medicine and Health Care and Pharmacy Organization”.

10. 02. 2021 r.  
Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury:



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/Ass. Prof. Natalya Usheva, MD, PhD/