

REVIEW

from

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About: thesis for acquiring an educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific specialty "Psychiatry" of dr. Tatyana Ivanova Telbizova, doctoral student in independent form of education, Department of Psychiatry and medical psychology, MU – Varna

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Mariana Dimitrova Arnaoudova – Jekova, MD, PhD, Department of Psychiatry and medical psychology, MU – Varna

Scientific consultant: Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Aleksandrov, PhD, DSc.

Subject: „Specifics and dynamics of the pain symptoms and experiences in patients with depression”

Professional direction: 7.1 “Medicine”

Scientific specialty: “Psychiatry” 03.01.20

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Biographical and professional information about the doctoral student:

Dr. Tatyana Ivanova Telbizova was born in 1976 in Varna. She graduated in Medicine in 2001 from the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna. Between 2002 and 2010, she has worked in the field of the pharmaceutical industry. In 2008 she earned a Master’s degree in Business Administration at New Bulgarian University. Since 2012 she has been working as an intern in a psychiatric clinic at “St. Marina” Hospital in Varna. She acquired a specialty in forensic psychiatry in 2017, a specialty in psychiatry in 2019, while also teaching students as a full-time lecturer. In 2019, after a conducted competition, she was appointed an assistant in ordinary at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology and became a PhD student in an independent form of training in the same department. She conducts exercises in Psychiatry and Medical psychology for students in medicine, dental medicine, clinical laboratory, assistant

pharmacists – both in Bulgarian and English. She is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Union and the Bulgarian Psychiatric Association.

Pain is a complex experience, subject to study by specialists in different fields of science – philosophy, psychology, medicine, etc.

Pain, according to the International Association for the Study of Pain is “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. It is the earliest symptom of tissue damage or disease”.

Pain can hinder one's daily activities and slow down the recovery of movement. Perhaps most significant is the fact that pain can change one's way of life and affect one's work, relationships and independence.

Pain is always subjective, and each person experiences pain in his own way.

This scientific work concerns the causal relationships between the affective and the sensory variables of pain and their influence on the specifics and the dynamics of pain-related experiences.

Analysis of the thesis:

The dissertation work consists of a review of the literature, objectives and tasks of the study, hypotheses, materials and methodology, results of the own studies, discussion of the results, conclusions, contributions, conclusion and bibliography, presented in 179 pages and illustrated by 77 tables and 20 figures.

The review of the literature indicates a good knowledge of the problem – it encompasses 370 literary sources, of which 16 are in Cyrillic script and 354 – in Latin script.

A critical analysis of the current state of the problem has been carried out and, accordingly, conclusions have been drawn about the unmet needs by the previous studies. Pain has been looked into from different aspects – prevalence, theories of origin, neurobiology. Special attention is paid to factors related to chronic pain, such as genetics, gender, age, as well as social and medical factors.

In a subsection about pain and multimorbidity, the link between chronic pain, on one hand, and insomnia, depression, schizophrenia and dementia, on the other hand, has been presented.

The literature on predisposing and protective pain factors has been reviewed.

The biopsychosocial model supports the thesis that the individual response to pain, respectively to the experiences, is a product of the interaction of biological, psychological and

social factors. Depression affects the manifestations of pain – intensity and duration. Anxiety also affects the experience of pain. In most cases, the symptoms of anxiety accompany the depressive syndromes in chronic pain and determine its more severe course.

The literary material is also creatively assessed in formulating the objectives and tasks and the hypothesis of the dissertation work. The aim is to study the influence of the severity of depression and anxiety on the intensity of pain and their influence on the specificity and the dynamics of the pain symptoms and comorbid patients with chronic pain and depression. The tasks of the dissertation work are determined in accordance with the objective set. There are also presented hypotheses, which have been looked into in the scientific work.

The author has used a wide range of tools: work card for sociodemographic data, clinical assessment; evaluation tools: HAMD-17; MMSE; Spielberger's Anxiety Assessment Questionnaire; Visual analog scale for pain quantification (VAS); a semi-structured interview for the studying of pain symptoms and experiences.

Contemporary statistical methods have been applied.

Procedures for the inclusion and examination of the patients are also presented.

Dr. Telbizova has studied 120 patients (98 women and 22 men) in two stages with the respective set of evaluation tools.

In the "Results" section are presented data from the descriptive statistics of 120 patients with chronic pain, which include age, gender, marital status, education, limitation of chronic pain, limitation period of depression (in 50.8% of the sample), antidepressant treatment, severity of depressive symptoms, state anxiety during both stages of the study, trait anxiety and pain intensity in both stages of the study.

In a separate subsection, the results of the Pearson correlation analysis between the main groups of indicators examined within the study were reported – the results of the VAS scales, HAM-D-17, STAI-Y1 u STAI -Y2 in the overall sample and in the two subgroups of subjects – those with chronic pain without depression and those with chronic pain and depression. Significant correlations between all indicators during the two stages of the study were found, with the degree of connection between the indicators being much higher in the second stage of the study. Results of significant correlations between the severity of depression and state anxiety; between the severity of depression and the intensity of pain; between the intensity of pain and state anxiety in the second stage were reported. In the first stage, significant correlations between the severity of

depression and the intensity of pain; between state and trait anxiety; between the intensity of pain and state anxiety were also found. For both stages, the correlation between the severity of the affective symptomatology and the intensity of pain has a high degree of correlation. Similar results are found in the regression analysis – depression is a major factor that affects the intensity of pain in patients with chronic pain and depression. It is noted that depression affects state anxiety. The treatment of the affective manifestations in patients with chronic pain affects the sensory component of pain and has a beneficial effect. The symptoms of depression and anxiety are part of the general condition and affect the sensations of pain. The content analysis of the experiences, as a qualitative method, explores their meaning and frequency. The author notes that patients with chronic pain and depression have experiences related to feelings of guilt and retribution for past mistakes. In the subsequent examination, the patients with chronic pain without depression showed an increase in the frequency of the experiences of suffering and punishment, i. e. the time experienced in pain is a prognostic sign of the development of depression.

Dr. Telbizova reserves a special place to the individual experiences for differentiating specific and dominant experiences for the general group of patients with chronic pain and depression.

The doctoral student has drawn 11 conclusions that correspond to the tasks assigned.

As major achievements, the studies that show the combined influence of the three variables – severity of depression, state anxiety and trait anxiety, can be highlighted. To a large extent, they explain the differences in pain intensity in patients with chronic pain and depression.

The contributions derived are three – they are theoretical and practical in nature.

The subject of the dissertation work submitted for review is relevant and contemporary. The positive aspects of the dissertation are indisputable. Its objective is formulated precisely and specifically. The stages of the study are presented as separate tasks. There is a logical and meaningful connection between the different parts of the thesis. They refer not only to the studied area, the methodology and the methods, but also to the detailed analysis of the results obtained and the conclusions and summaries drawn. The results, discussion, conclusions and contributions are correctly and analytically presented. The text is clearly written and can be read without difficulties. A significant part of the analyses have a real practical and methodical focus.

In the "Discussion" section, Dr. Telbizova summarizes the results of the study, thoroughly analyzes her own data. Her own results were insufficiently discussed with what is reported in the

literature.

For future research, as a continuation of the present one, I would recommend that she should analyse the results and formulate which of the factors are of predictive protective value for a more favorable course and outcome of the experiences related to chronic pain.

The author's summary reflects the dissertation work in a condensed and summarized form. The scientific research and its description in articles, reports, in the thesis itself and in the summary are the doctoral student's own work.

Dr. Telbizova has 3 publications, closely related to the topic of dissertation work, and one participation in a scientific event.

Conclusion

The work of Dr. Tatyana Ivanova Telbizova on the topic of „Specifics and dynamics of the pain symptoms and experiences in patients with depression” meets the requirements for the qualitative and quantitative criteria of the Academic Staff Development Law in the Republic of Bulgaria (ASDLRB) for conferment of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in the field of higher education “7. Healthcare and sport, by professional direction “7.1 Medicine” and scientific specialty “ Psychiatry”.

I give my positive assessment of the conducted study, the achieved results and contributions and I suggest to the honorable scientific jury to vote positively for Dr. Tatyana Telbizova, doctoral student in an independent form of education.

Sofia, 20.05.2021

Signature:



Prof. Dr. V. Milanova, MD, PhD, DSc