

POSITION

by Prof. Dr. Ivan Nikolov Dimitrov, MD, PhD, DSc

Director of Sliven Affiliate, Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University, Varna

on the Doctoral thesis of Dr. Tatiana Ivanova Telbizova entitled
“Specifics and Dynamics of Pain Symptoms and Experiences in Patients with Depression”,
scientific specialty “Psychiatry”

By decision of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Medicine at Medical University – Varna, protocol No 42/19.04.2021 and by Order of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna No P-109-172/23.04.2021 I was elected a member of the Scientific Jury, and on the basis of Protocol No 1/26.04.2021 I was appointed to prepare a Position (in Bulgarian and English language) on the procedure for obtaining an educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” by Dr. Tatiana Ivanova Telbizova at the Medical University of Varna.

Brief biographical data about the candidate

Dr. Tatiana Telbizova was born in Varna. She graduated in Medicine at Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University. Between 2011 and 2017 she specialized in forensic psychiatry, and between 2017 and 2019 in psychiatry. In 2018 she was appointed honored assistant-professor at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Medical University of Varna, and since 2019 she has been a full-time assistant at the same department. Dr. Telbizova has participated in scientific conferences and courses for additional professional and language training.

Relevance of the topic of the thesis

The thesis is devoted to an important interdisciplinary problem, namely that of the characteristics of pain symptoms and experiences in a socially significant medical condition such as depression. The problem is undoubtedly relevant from a scientific point of view, which, in itself, justifies the conduction of the study. It is also of great importance for practice, as the presence of accompanying symptoms in patients with depression can further worsen their functional status and quality of life. Useful in this regard are the results that determine the severity of depression as a major affective factor influencing the variations in pain sensation.

Structure and content of the thesis

The thesis is written according to the respective requirements. It contains 179 pages and includes the following sections: table of contents (3 pages), abbreviations (1 page), introduction (2 pages), literature review with conclusions (44 pages), methodology (5 pages), results (59 pages), discussion (21 pages), conclusions (2 pages), contributions (1 page), general conclusion (1 page), bibliography (21 pages), and 6 appendices (9 pages). The reference section includes 369 sources, of which 15 in Cyrillic and 354 in Latin. Seventy-seven tables and 20 figures are included.

The literature review is of sufficient volume and reflects the current understanding of the topic of the work. The successful presentation by the author of some different points of view on the considered problems is impressive. A critical analysis of the literature is also made.

The aim of the study, "To examine the impact of the severity of depression and anxiety (personal and situational) on pain intensity and their impact on the specificity and dynamics of pain symptoms and experiences in comorbid patients with chronic pain and depression" is relatively clear. The following 5 tasks emerge: to examine the degree of influence of the severity of depression and anxiety (personal and situational) on the intensity of pain by seeking correlations and causal relationships between the main groups of parameters; to analyze and summarize the specific experiences associated with pain in patients with chronic pain and depression; to examine the dynamics of the experiences associated with pain, and to what extent they are influenced by the severity of depression; to examine the influence of the depression on situational perception during pain and the characteristics of pain (frequency and description of the sensation of pain); to conceptualize a model for the study of comorbid patients with chronic pain and depression. The author has formulated 4 hypotheses, assuming correlations between the severity of depression, situational anxiety, personal anxiety and pain intensity; that the severity of depression, situational anxiety, and personal anxiety have uneven degrees of influence on pain intensity; that depression affects the manifestation of specific experiences associated with pain and the way the situation is perceived during pain in patients with chronic pain; that the change in the severity of depression dynamically transforms pain-associated experiences and the way the situation is perceived during pain.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University, Varna.

The study participants are a sufficient number (120). They present with a normal age distribution, but with a significant predominance of females. Various questionnaires and scales

are included. The applied methods for statistical analysis are suitable for the tasks set, and the analysis is thorough.

The presented results are extensive and are illustrated with numerous tables and figures, which is determined by and is in accordance with the nature of the work. Discussion of the results includes comparisons with the works of other authors, where possible, and the author's own comments are also presented.

A significant number of conclusions (11) are pointed out regarding the applicability of the test methods used to study and dynamically monitor pain and affective symptoms in patients with chronic pain and depression, the influence of the severity of depression on the intensity of pain in comorbidity, differences in the impact of situational and personal anxiety on the intensity of pain, the influence of depression on the perception of the situation in pain, etc. Some of the conclusions presented in this way could have been summarized and their number could have been reduced.

Three contributions of the study are noted, which have not only scientific but also practical character: a model was built for the study of patients with chronic pain and depression, combining qualitative and quantitative methods; a set of test methods has been proposed for the assessment and dynamic monitoring of pain and affective symptoms in patients with chronic pain and depression; conceptualization and operationalization of the experience related to pain in patients with chronic pain or depression have been achieved in the direction of their decomposition to a lower hierarchical level for the purpose of description and analysis.

Three publications in scientific journals related to the topic of the dissertation are presented.

The author's readiness to declare some restrictions of the study, such as that it does not claim to be epidemiological, but is oriented towards the search for specific and dominant experiences with regard to chronic pain, makes a positive impression.

Conclusion

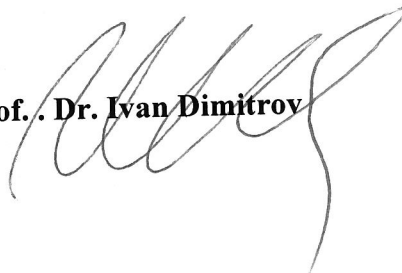
The thesis of Dr. Tatiana Ivanova Telbizova examines issues that are significant and relevant in both theoretical and practical aspects. The author demonstrates good knowledge of the problem and ability to handle scientific information. The goal is clearly formulated, the tasks and methods are selected adequately. The results are presented in an appropriate form. There are scientific and practical contributions. The thesis is made in accordance with the requirements in terms of content and technical layout. Some small remarks do not impair the overall quality of the work and the positive impression it makes.

All of the above gives me a reason to vote positively for the attribution of the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” to Dr. Tatiana Ivanova Telbizova in the scientific specialty of "Psychiatry" and to suggest that the members of the Scientific Jury support the procedure as well.

17 May 2021

Varna

Prof. . Dr. Ivan Dimitrov

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long vertical stroke at the end, positioned over the printed name of the professor.