

REVIEW

BY: PROF. ELENA MLADENOVA SHIPKOVENSKA, MD, PhD

ON THE PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING THE SCIENTIFIC DEGREE "DOCTOR OF SCIENCES" IN THE SCIENTIFIC SPECIALTY "PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT" OF ASSOCIATE PROF. MIHAELA ATANASOVA VARNEVA, PhD OF THE DISSERTATION THESIS ON THE TOPIC "PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTIVITY OF DENTAL TECHNICIANS IN BULGARIA"

By order No. R-109-371/04.11.2024 of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, I am appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for ensuring a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Professional association and development of the activity of dental technicians in Bulgaria", for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the field of higher education: 7. Health and Sports; Professional field: 7.4. Public Health; Scientific specialty: "Public Health Management".

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANDIDATE

- Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Atanasova Varneva graduated from the IPZKSSO "Dr. N. Nikolaev" - Varna, majoring in "Dental Technician" in 1983.
- In 1994, she passed the qualifying exam for obtaining a semi-higher medical education in the specialty "Dental Technician".
- Since 2000, she has been a bachelor in "Health Care Management", with a professional qualification "Health Care Manager and College Lecturer".
- In 2010, she obtained a master's degree, majoring in "Sports Psychology", National Academy of Sports Sciences "V. Levski".
- From 2011 - 2013, she was a doctoral student in independent training at the Faculty of Public Health, MU - Varna, majoring in "Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy", Medical University - Varna.
- From 1984 - 2015, she was a lecturer in practice at the Faculty of Public Health, MU – Varna.
- She holds an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" since 2013.
- In 2015, she was elected as an Associate professor in the specialty "Public Health Management".
- Since 2021, she has been working as an "Associate professor" in the Department of "Clinical Medical Sciences" MU-Varna.
- Awards: 2017. Diploma for exceptional merits to the development of the Medical College - Varna
- Languages for communication: Russian - good level in writing and very good level in speaking

Dissertation data

The dissertation submitted to me for review complies with the requirements for volume and distribution. It is developed in four chapters and contains 238 pages. It is illustrated with 19 tables, 24 figures, 24 photographs, 4 diagrams and 9 appendices.

In order to gain a more realistic idea of the thematic scope of the dissertation, I will indicate the names of the main topics in the development: development of professional associations in healthcare after 1878 to the present day; legal regulation of the professional organization of dental technicians in Bulgaria; periodization of the associations and professional organizations of practitioners in the specialty "Dental Technician" in our country; analysis of foreign experience in organizing professional unions of dental technicians; demographic, professional and qualification characteristics of working dental technicians and teachers in the specialty with the educational and qualification degree "Dental Technician" in the Republic of Bulgaria; assessment of the opinions of practicing dental technicians and teachers in the specialty "Dental Technician" on the regulatory framework and management of the Dental Technician Association in our country; SWOT-analysis of the activity in the specialty "Dental Technician".

Relevance of the dissertation

It is known that the direction of development in a given area is set in previous periods, which determines the need for knowledge of the past. Unfortunately, the historical approach in healthcare is rarely used, compared to other approaches /economic, health-political and statistical/, which emphasizes the importance of the development and choice of the topic as successful.

Introduction

The main aspects considered in the dissertation are summarized, with an emphasis on the level of development of the activities of the professional organizations of dental technicians and on some issues related to the training and practice of this specialty.

The literature review is based on 281 literary sources, of which 204 in Cyrillic and 77 in Latin.

The information from the studied literary sources is systematized and allows us to present and compare the time of the emergence of the Dental Technician Association in Bulgaria with that of the other associations and unions of health professionals. New, interesting information has been extracted proving that the Associations and professional organizations of practitioners of the specialty "Dental Technician" in our country go through seven historical periods and that the professional association of dental technicians, established in 1910, existed independently until 1947. After 1944, the dental technician and dentist professions developed together until 2019. Only in 2019 t

he dental technician profession receives its own professional organization, legitimized by the Law on the Professional Organization of Nurses, Midwives and Associated Medical Specialists, Dental Technicians and Assistant Pharmacists, in which all practitioners of this profession are mandatory members.

The professional organizations of those practicing the specialty "Dental Technician" protect their members and determine the rules for practicing the profession. The author analyzes the first Statute and Regulations, which set out the initial goals and objectives of the association. An interesting fact is that the duties of a dental technician in the past were not limited to making dental prosthetic structures, but the dental technician had the right to "take measurements from the patient's mouth" and "place the structures he made into the patient's mouth", which is currently prohibited. The author emphasizes that during the long path of development, the profession of dental technician is constantly changing depending on the constantly changing requirements of dentists, patients and the healthcare system. From the emergence of the profession to the present, the workforce has been a highly variable variable. Assoc. Prof. Varneva summarizes that the path that dental technicians have traveled since the creation of the profession to this day is long. The beginning was made when, due to the increase in the volume of work, dentists began to train dental assistants. The first major increase in the number of dental technicians between 1950 and 1956 was due to the decentralization of healthcare management, the introduction of free medical care and increased access to dental care.

In the course of the reforms, the ownership of health care institutions in dental care also changed and the provision of health care went through a number of stages: from one hundred percent private ownership to one hundred percent state ownership from 1974 to 1989, through mixed (public-state or public-private) and again almost one hundred percent private ownership.

The available documentation and regulatory framework, according to which statutes and regulations for the organization were created, were analyzed. The legal regulation and policy of the professional organization of dental technicians in Bulgaria and of 19 professional organizations of dental technicians around the world were assessed. Foreign experience regarding the activities and training of dental technicians was studied and a comparative analysis was made. It was established that the professional qualities necessary for practicing the profession and developing the activity are identical: a high level of dexterity and manual skills, the ability to accurately follow the prescriptions and instructions, a sense of harmony, form and aesthetics, the ability to work independently and the skills to solve problem situations. Professional organizations operating in European countries differ in their approaches to continuing education. In some countries, the implementation of the program of activities is a mandatory part of employment, while in others a license is required and the activity is regulated by an internal or external competent authority.

The synthesis of literary sources made by Assoc. Prof. Varneva shows a thorough knowledge of the problem, presentation of new information, good professional and terminological competence.

Commentary on the purpose and methods of the study:

The present scientific work is the result of the efforts and interests of the author in the field of health care management and the practice of the specialty "Dental Technician". Both the goal and the 10 tasks set in this regard are extensive, but clearly formulated. They correspond to the topic of the dissertation. The researched individuals are comprehensively characterized, and the methods used are well selected.

The study includes theoretical and empirical research, using content analysis (quantitative analysis) of documentation, documentary historiographic method, sociological methods for in-depth and standardized interviews, SWOT analysis.

The theoretical study helps to track the development of the activities of dental technicians in Bulgaria, by revealing the available documentation and regulatory framework, according to which statutes and regulations for professional organizations and the trade union movement in healthcare in our country were created.

The empirical study among practicing dental technicians aims to establish their knowledge of the regulatory framework, the management of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians and their expectations from the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians regarding the conduct of the Postgraduate Training. A survey among teachers in the specialty "Dental Technician" has two goals - recognition of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians as its own professional organization and the willingness of respondents to participate in the Postgraduate Training of practicing dental technicians.

The dissertation work has applied classical statistical methods of analysis, with the results presented in informative tables and graphic summaries.

As sources of information, official regulatory documents, specialized professional literature, archival books, collections, etc. materials from the library of the Museum of the History of Medicine at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, databases from ResearchGate, MEDLINE, PubMed, Google scholar, eLibrary. ru, Scopus, as well as primary data collected specifically for the needs of the dissertation work - results of own studies.

The chosen research methodology allows for the successful achievement of the set goal and adequate solution of the tasks in the dissertation work.

Discussion on the conducted studies:

The theoretical study mainly outlines the role and place of dental technician associations in healthcare in Bulgaria. The retrospective of the activity during the period from 1910 to 2022 shows interesting findings that

the membership during the different periods is different in number, because not always everyone is a member of the organization due to reluctance or restrictions imposed by it itself. Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians regulates the activities of its members through a number of regulatory documents (statute, rules of good practice and ethical codes), maintains registers, controls compliance with the rules and norms and does not organize Postgraduate Training of practicing dental technicians who are members of it. The analysis of the experience of foreign professional organizations of dental technicians allows the author to conclude that these associations are desirable and membership, which is voluntary in some of them, is a matter of prestige. The policies and strategies of these organizations are similar to the Bulgarian ones.

The empirical study presents for the first time in our country the expectations of dental technicians and teachers in the specialty "Dental Technician" towards the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians. The respondents' opinions on issues important for the training and practice of the profession were studied and compared. The respondents emphasized important issues for the profession related to the lack of methodology and organization of continuing/postgraduate training; the lack of methodology and organization of mentoring as a process and part of training in the specialty; the lack of methodology for accreditation of independent medical and technical laboratories as bases for the continuing training of practicing dental technicians, etc. According to the analysis of the data from the own study, there are conditions for actions aimed at changing the perceptions of dental technicians about the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians, which would become desirable and recognizable among those working in the specialty "Dental Technician" and membership in it would be a matter of prestige. The author argues for the need for each regulated profession to have its own professional organization.

The results of the study allow us to trace not only the long journey that dental technicians have traveled, but also how the practice of the specialty is developing and enriching, and how the change in the socio-political system in our country affects the profession and professional organizations. The results allow us to collect current data on the organization of continuing/postgraduate education and to develop an author's Model for the development of the activity in the specialty "Dental Technician" and a Strategy for the development of the profession "Dental Technician".

I agree with the contributions formulated by Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Varneva.

The abstract of the dissertation correctly reflects the structure of the dissertation and contains the most significant results and conclusions from the study.

Compliance with the minimum requirements of MU-Varna for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"

Indicators groups	Required number of points for Doctor of Science	Number of points for Assoc. Prof. Varneva, according to the evidence presented
Group A	50	50
Group B	100	100
Group G / ind. from 5-9/	100	480
Group D indicators from 10-12	100	170
Общо	350	800

Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Varneva, meets the minimum requirements of MU-Varna for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences".

In thematic connection with the dissertation work, she has presented 14 publications. The author is the only author in the presented scientific works, which confirms her personal participation in the development of the dissertation.

The Medical Library-Varna has certified 30 citations / 4 citations in monographs and collective works with scientific review and 26 – in works without scientific review /.

I have several critical comments on the dissertation submitted for review. There are no intermediate conclusions in the literature review, as well as in the individual sections of the results obtained. The conclusions are collected at the end, where it is more logical to comment on the most important aspects of the study.

The presented SWOT analysis needs additional situational analysis.

CONCLUSION

The presented dissertation puts on the agenda an interesting and poorly studied problem. This is the first of its kind purposeful and in-depth study of the development of professional associations of dental technicians in our country and of the attitude of the members of the "Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians" towards the association and towards postgraduate education in the specialty.

The dissertation contains theoretical and practical-applied contributions, which makes it valuable for any future research related to the professional association and development of the activities of dental technicians in Bulgaria.

The qualities of the dissertation, along with its compliance with the criteria set out in the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its application and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of MU - Varna are the grounds for my positive assessment and

recommendation to the members of the Scientific Jury for awarding the scientific degree "**Doctor of Sciences**" to **Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Atanasova Varneva, PhD**, majoring in Public Health Management.

05.12.2024
Sofia

REVIEWER:

(Prof. Elena Shipkovenska, MD, Ph.D)

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