

STATEMENT

by Prof. Elena Shipkovenska, MD,Ph.D

regarding a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" on the topic "Child mortality in Bulgaria - health-political and cultural-historical aspects"

Author: Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihailova – Georgieva
Research supervisor: : Prof. Klara Dokova, MD,Ph.D

By Order P-109/29.01.2024 of the Rector of the MU - Varna, I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury in the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic "Child mortality in Bulgaria - health-political and cultural-historical aspects" of Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihailova – Georgieva, doctoral student in independent study in doctoral program "Public Health Management", professional direction 7.4 Public Health.

The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents for the competition, provided for in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff and the Regulations for the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic Positions at the MU-Varna.

1. Data for the dissertation work

The presented work is developed on 155 pages, including text, 10 tables and 19 graphic images and 6 appendices. The bibliographic list to it includes 218 sources, of which 79 are in Cyrillic and 139 are in Latin.

The content is presented in a classic version: introduction, literature review, aim and objectives, presentation and methods, results and discussion, conclusion, conclusions.

2. Actuality of the dissertation work

In recent decades, the European Community has been looking for methods and means to overcome health inequalities and improve population health throughout the region. Dynamics in mortality indicators, including infant mortality, are major criteria for the nature and severity of health problems in any country. Therefore, knowing the trends in child mortality by region and implementing a policy to prevent mortality through health literacy and public health interventions on families/mothers to prepare for birth and raising a child at an early age is a new approach to overcome health and social inequalities in the European continent.

This gives me reason to define the choice of the topic as appropriate and the topic itself as relevant, not only in view of the state of our health care, but also on a global scale.

3. Awareness of the problem

Nadezhda Mihailova-Georgieva's synthesis of the literary sources shows in-depth knowledge of the problem, good professional and terminological competence.

4. Evaluation of the goal, the tasks and the methodical approach

The purpose, tasks and hypotheses formulated in the dissertation development are specific and substantiated. The chosen methodology allows successful achievement of the set goal and adequate solving of the tasks.

The research was carried out by applying sociological and analytical methods of classical statistics.

The study is complex:

The first stage includes a theoretical-historical study of child mortality in relation to the development of a concept of the child during Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Modern Age.

The second stage tracks the trends in child mortality - general and age-specific for Bulgaria and for selected European countries for the period 1950-2020.

The third stage assesses mothers' readiness for childbirth and care for the child in the period 0 - 1 year.

The fourth stage presents the cultural specificity in the prenatal behavior of mothers of the Roma ethnicity and their care for children in early childhood.

5. Evaluation of results

The applied analytical methods allow the author to trace the practices for reducing child mortality indicators: general and age-specific in Bulgaria and in other European countries. The following questions are thoroughly studied and discussed in the dissertation:

- trends in the specific older indicators - neonatal (early and late), perinatal, post-neonatal child mortality and their relationship with social, demographic and health-organizational conditions;
- interregional differences in the child mortality indicators in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- the role of the various units of the health system in preparing mothers to provide full care for children;
- educational, ethnic and cultural differences in the awareness and behavior of mothers.

The results of the study are important, identifying two key periods for the Republic of Bulgaria: a period of intense decline in the child mortality indicators /from 1950 to the beginning of the 1970s/ and a period of retention and a slight increase in the total child mortality from 1990 to 2000. The importance is emphasized of the factors that have a major role in reducing child mortality in our country during the period of intense decline in mortality. The most significant of them are: creating a legislative framework for the social protection of motherhood and childhood and building a national health system of a centralized type with priority care for mothers and children.

New, interesting information has been extracted proving that in the problem circle "Determinants of child mortality", an important place is occupied by inequalities / by place of residence - village-city, by educational level of the mother, by socio-economic status of the families, etc./ They are indicated priority population groups and evidenced health interventions to overcome deficits in the activity, structures or processes in the health system. In the context of the movement in European countries for a new public health care, for the first time the trends and differences in the total and older child mortality in the six regions of Bulgaria over a 20-year period have been studied and the ranking of the regions according to each indicator of child mortality in relation to persistent inequalities has been established: center (capital) – periphery. Guidelines with practical application in health care to reduce child mortality are derived. I agree with the report on the contributions of the dissertation work presented by Nadezhda Mihailova.

The text is illustrated with well-developed statistical tables and graphical images that are highly informative.

The abstract for the dissertation correctly reflects the structure of the dissertation and contains the most important results and conclusions of the study.

The results of the studies in the dissertation have been published in 3 out-of-print publications.

CONCLUSION:

An up-to-date in meaning and original in design research was carried out, having important cognitive and practical-applied aspects. The problems related to child mortality have been studied many times, but the approach applied by Nadezhda Mihailova is unconventional and innovative. Her view of child mortality as a socio-cultural phenomenon makes it possible to reveal some hitherto unexplored problems related to historical demography and interregional differences in general and older child mortality in our country. The results contain "new lessons from the past" with useful advice related to the need for families, resp. mothers to synchronize their efforts to prepare for childbirth and

to raise children in early childhood, taking into account the rapidly changing conditions in society.

The dissertation fully meets the requirements of the qualitative and quantitative criteria for the development of the academic staff, specified in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in our country and the Regulations of the MU-Varna for the acquisition of the scientific educational degree "Doctor". Everything stated in the opinion gives me reason, convinced to recommend to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the awarding of the scientific and educational degree "**Doctor**" to Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihailova – Georgieva in the scientific specialty "Public Health Management".

29.04.2024 г.
Sofia

Member of Scientific Jury:
(Prof. Elena Shipkovenska, MD, Ph.D)

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