

POSITION

by Assoc. Mariana Nikolova Dimitrova, PhD

**Associate Professor in the Department of Health Care, Faculty of Public Health, at the
Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna**

on a dissertation work

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN CHILDREN WITH THERMAL TRAUMA

by Kichka Dimitrova Trendafilova

For the award of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Field of higher education: 7. Health care and sport

Professional direction: 7.4. Public Health

Specialty: "Healthcare Management"

with academic supervisor:

Prof. Silvia Borisova Dimitrova, PhD

1. General presentation of the procedure

By order of the Rector of MU-Varna No. P-109-42 of January 31, 2020, Kichka Dimitrova Trendafilova was enrolled as a doctoral student in regular form of education for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education: 7. Health care and sport, professional direction: 7.4. Public Health, specialty: "Healthcare Management".

The documentation includes a Protocol of an examination in a foreign language and a Protocol of an examination to cover the doctoral minimum.

By Order No. P-109-66 of March 6, 2024, of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, based on Report No. 102-591/21.02.2024 of the Head of the Department of Health Care, Assoc. Katya Genova Egerus, PhD, with a decision by Protocol No. 221/28.02.2024 of the Faculty Council and Report No. 104-298/05.03.2024 of Prof. Antonia Slavcheva Dimova, MD – Dean of the Faculty of Public Health, Kichka Dimitrova Trendafilova has been dismissed with the right to defense.

The presented set of documents complies with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" - Varna and includes: dissertation work, abstract, autobiography, list and copies of publications on the topic of the dissertation work, declarations, etc.

2. Biographical data and career development

Kichka Dimitrova Trendafilova was born in 1974 in Dobrich. During the period 1992-1996, she graduated from PMI - Varna, specializing in "nurse-general profile." Pursuing her desire for development, she continued her education and in 2001 obtained a Bachelor's degree in "Healthcare" from MU-Sofia, three years later (2004) a Master's degree in "Public

Health" from MU "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna. During 2010-2012, she obtained a Master's degree in "Healthcare Management" from MU "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

Kichka Trendafilova 's professional career began in 1996 at the City Hospital - Varna, as a nurse, and a few years later until 2003, she held the position of senior nurse in the emergency department of the same medical institution. During the period 2003-2022, she worked as a senior nurse in the Clinic of Thermal Trauma, Plastic-Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery at MBAL - VARNA, affiliated with VMA Sofia. After a competition in 2022, she assumed the position of senior nurse in the gastroenterology department specializing in oncological diseases at SBALOZ "Dr. M.A. Markov - Varna" EOOD, where she currently works. In 2020, she was enrolled as a doctoral student in the Department of Health Care, specializing in "Healthcare Management". She conducts classes in the disciplines "Nursing care for patients with surgical diseases", Educational/clinical practice. She has completed numerous courses for continuous professional development, has participated with presentations at international and national conferences. In 2023, she obtained a specialization in "Hospital Hygiene (prevention and control of infections)".

She is a member of the Bulgarian Association of Healthcare Professionals. She has intermediate level proficiency in English and Russian.

3. Assessment of the topicality of the theme

Burns are the third leading cause of injury-related mortality in childhood. The significance of the topic is justified not only by the physical impact on the body but also by the long-term psycho-emotional, functional, and aesthetic consequences. Hypertrophic scars are commonly seen after burns and can cause significant functional and cosmetic impairment. The physical, psychological, general, and local consequences require prolonged monitoring, constant surgical interventions, rehabilitation, slow and prolonged recovery. This often has a psychosocial impact on the development of children, especially at an early age.

In her work, the doctoral student examines the specific role and responsibilities in providing care and support to children during their recovery period after thermal trauma. Improving the quality of healthcare for children with thermal injuries requires innovative and individualized approaches that address both the physical and emotional aspects of their needs.

In connection with the above facts, I believe that the topic chosen by the doctoral student for the dissertation work has high scientific value and provides the premise for the doctoral candidate to reach significant empirical research findings and conclusions.

4. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The presented work fully meets the requirements for the format of a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in terms of volume and structure. The dissertation contains 207 pages, structured into five chapters, and is illustrated with 50 figures and 11 tables. There are 200 cited literary sources, of which 79 are in Cyrillic and 121 in Latin script. The bibliography demonstrates the author's extensive knowledge and up-to-date awareness.

Literature Review

The author conducts an extensive and thorough theoretical study and analysis of current literary sources concerning the problem of thermal trauma. In a logical sequence, the doctoral student provides a historical analysis of thermal traumas from ancient times to the present day. The development of plastic-reconstructive and aesthetic surgery in the world and Bulgaria, which today is associated with the treatment of thermal traumas, is traced. The types of thermal traumas caused by high temperatures are competently described. The differences in skin thickness and area between adults and children are highlighted.

Emphasis is placed on the modern aspects of diagnosing, treating, and monitoring patients with thermal trauma. The international experience in the treatment and care of patients with burns in modern nursing practice is presented. The role of the multidisciplinary team in the different stages of thermal trauma treatment is examined. The main challenges and barriers faced by patients with thermal trauma are outlined, and the possibilities for their resolution are presented. A theoretical analysis of the pathophysiology of burns, the essence, significance, and factors influencing thermal trauma in childhood is provided.

The logically structured literature review reveals extensive competencies in the field of the discussed problem.

Research Methodology

Kichka Trendafilova has precisely formulated the goal of the study: "To analyze the organization of healthcare for children who have suffered thermal trauma and to identify the challenges in current practice and potential areas for improvement to enhance the quality of life during the recovery period." To achieve this goal, seven specific tasks are outlined as the basis for achieving the final goal. Five research hypotheses are formulated. The organization of the study is competently and correctly described and includes: subject, object, logical units, and territory of the study.

The research design includes theoretical and empirical studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study are defined. The stages of the scientific research are presented in detail, reflecting specific activities, location of implementation, and time frame. The instruments are professionally developed, reflecting international research experience and the doctoral student's views. For the purposes of the quantitative research, a Questionnaire for conducting a standardized interview and three variants of Survey Cards are developed. For the qualitative research among parents regarding the impact of thermal trauma on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of children, in-depth interviews were conducted. For this purpose, a questionnaire for in-depth interviews was developed, divided into four areas – thermal trauma, recovery period, social adaptation, family, and environment.

The applied research methods: documentary, sociological, and statistical, are adequate to the set goals and tasks and allow the establishment of dependencies.

The methodology meets the accepted scientific standards, inspires confidence in the reliability of the obtained results, and is proof of the doctoral student's preparedness to conduct independent research work.

Results and Discussion

The dissertation presents results logically formatted and structured in the third chapter. The study evaluates the challenges in contemporary nursing practice and the opportunities to optimize care during the recovery period to improve the quality of life for children with thermal injuries. This evaluation is based on the opinions of 182 parents of children who have experienced thermal injuries, including 10 parents of children with thermal injuries affecting more than 20% of their bodies. The opinions of 61 medical professionals working in burn clinics/units were also examined. Additionally, the opinions of 57 educators and nurses working in child care institutions were analyzed. The study also assessed the views of 14 medical professionals who lead burn treatment facilities.

The results of the in-depth interviews reveal that thermal injuries occur suddenly and unexpectedly, causing a strong emotional impact on parents, necessitating psychological support to cope with emotional difficulties and stress. The study thoroughly explores parents' opinions regarding the impact of thermal injuries on their children's physical, psychological, and social well-being. The need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach in the treatment of children with thermal injuries is highlighted, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and coordination among those involved in the recovery period.

All participants in the study share the need for the creation of a specialized structure to support the recovery process of children who have suffered thermal injuries. They recognize the seriousness of thermal injuries in children and unanimously agree that these children need specialized assistance and support for recovery.

The significance of continuous education and development for nurses in health institutions is emphasized to ensure the highest quality of care for children after thermal injuries, wherever they might be treated. The competencies that nurses in the multidisciplinary team must possess to improve the quality of life for children who have experienced thermal injuries are outlined.

The study clearly demonstrates the broad social significance of thermal injuries and their impact on patients' lifestyles. The experts involved in the study are unanimous that these injuries leave lasting effects that will accompany the affected individual throughout their life. The need for the development and implementation of more effective strategies for the prevention and treatment of thermal injuries, as well as for supporting patients in their recovery process, is substantiated.

Precise statistical processing of the data and the analysis of Bulgarian and international practices allow the doctoral candidate to substantiate the need for practical approaches to optimize nursing care for children who have experienced thermal injuries. The organizational framework developed by the doctoral candidate for working with children who have suffered thermal injuries includes various factors such as medical treatment, psychological support, rehabilitation, social integration, and family support. The framework covers different aspects of treatment and support for affected children. The developed Patient Assessment Checklist has high scientific value and aims to assist in gathering and analyzing information about the child, reduce anxiety, and guide the nurse in the care process. The SWOT analysis model applied enables the author to accurately and comprehensively visualize the actual situation and outline the need for follow-up health care for children who

have suffered thermal injuries after their hospital treatment, aiming to improve their quality of life.

The conclusions are clearly formulated, practically oriented, follow the set research tasks, and logically stem from the obtained results.

I express my agreement with the doctoral candidate's self-assessment regarding the theoretical and practical contributions. Rational proposals have been made to responsible institutions, aimed at the involvement of nurses in the care of children with thermal injuries.

The Author's Summary

The summary is prepared according to the requirements and reflects the most important aspects of the dissertation. However, I believe that the fourth chapter is not fully represented in the summary. It is well-illustrated with informative tables, figures, and diagrams.

In connection with the dissertation, the doctoral candidate presents a list of publications and participation in scientific forums, which includes three titles related to the topic of the presented work.

Personal Impressions

I have known Kichka Trendafilova for more than ten years and have largely witnessed her professional development. I highly appreciate her dedication, responsibility, hard work, and drive for self-improvement. Her communication skills, goal-oriented approach, and high motivation for work are excellent traits that make her a good professional and researcher..

Conclusion

The dissertation presented by Kichka Trendafilova, titled "Improving the Quality of Life for Children with Thermal Injuries," for the attainment of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor," is a completed scientific project developed on a relevant topic, well-structured, and executed at a very high scientific level. The author's scientific achievements stand out for their originality and practical applicability.

The dissertation meets all the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University of Varna.

The dissertation demonstrates that Kichka Trendafilova possesses deep theoretical knowledge and professional skills, showcasing qualities and abilities for conducting independent scientific research.

The aforementioned merits and contributions of the dissertation are the basis for me to give a positive opinion and confidently propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" to Kichka Dimitrova Trendafilova in the specialty "Health Care Management" within the higher education area 7. Health and Sports; professional field 7.4. Public Health.

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679

15.05.2024 г.

Varna

Assoc. Prof. Mariana Nikolova Dimitrova, Ph.D

Member of the Scientific Jury