

OPINION

From Assoc. Prof. Pepa Miteva Dzhezheva, PhD
Department of "Health Care," Sliven Branch at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury according to Order № R-109-319 dated 24.07.2025 by the
Rector of Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna

Regarding: procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

In the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports,

professional field 7.4. Public Health,

specialty: Health Care

Management to **Dora Georgieva Vasileva** – PhD candidate

in part-time studies

Topic: Independent Nursing Practice – Opportunities and Challenges Scientific

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Anna Petrova Georgieva, PhD (Health Care)

1. General Presentation of the Procedure

By Order of the Rector of Medical University – Varna № P-109-278 dated 08.07.2021, Dora Georgieva Vasileva was enrolled as a part-time PhD student in the Doctoral Program "Health Care Management" at the Department of "Health Care," Sliven Branch of the Medical University – Varna, for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public Health, specialty: Health Care Management.

The dissertation authored by Dora Georgieva Vasileva, titled "**Independent Nursing Practice – Opportunities and Challenges**" for the award of the PhD degree was discussed and approved for defense by the Department Council of the Department of "Health Care," Sliven Branch of Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna on 17.06.2025. The scientific supervisor is Assoc. Prof. Anna Petrova Georgieva, PhD.

The submitted documents comply with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna. These include: the dissertation, abstract, curriculum vitae, list of publications related to the dissertation topic, copies of publications, declarations, and others.

2. Brief Biographical Data for the PhD Candidate

The author, Dora Georgieva Vasileva, graduated from the College for Health Specialists "Dr. N. Nikolaev" in Varna (Medical College) with a specialty in Pediatric Nursing in 1986. She continued her education and graduated in 2001 in "Health Management" at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna, and in 2002 in "Human Resource Management" at the University of Economics – Varna. In 2010, she obtained a Master's degree in "Health Care Management" from Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna.

From 1992 to 2018, she worked as a Senior Nurse in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at University Multispecialty Hospital "St. Marina" JSC. From April 2017 to present, she has been the manager of the Group Outpatient Practice for Primary Health Care Nursing "The Nurses" Ltd. in Varna. Concurrently, since 2018, she also works as a Senior Nurse in the Pediatric Surgery Department at Multispecialty Hospital "St. Anna" – Varna JSC.

She has completed more than 18 professional qualification courses at national and international levels in the field of health care.

3. Data on the Dissertation

The dissertation by Dora Vasileva is focused on investigating the opportunities and challenges related to independent nursing practices and developing innovative approaches to optimize their activities. The dissertation has a total volume of 204 pages, of which the main text is 161 pages. It is structured into four chapters: Chapter 1: Literature Review – Relevance of the Problem Chapter 2: Aim, Tasks, Methodology Chapter 3: Results of Own Research Chapter 4: Innovative Practical Approaches Creating Opportunities to Overcome Challenges to Health Care Provided by Nurses in Independent Nursing Practices, Conclusions, Contributions, Appendices, and Bibliography. The dissertation is illustrated with 6 tables, 55 figures, and 4 appendices. The bibliography contains 201 references: 109 in Cyrillic and 92 in Latin script.

The chapters are chronologically connected and meet the structural and content requirements for such scientific work. The research tools are developed by the author herself and include two questionnaires aimed at studying awareness about independent nursing practices, their possibilities and challenges, and a semi-structured interview questionnaire for gathering experts' opinions—presented in the appendices. Two scientific publications related to the dissertation topic have been published in thematic connection with the dissertation

4. Assessment of the Relevance of the Topic

The relevance of the topic is justified by the increasing societal needs related to demographic and social factors, which create a necessity for providing personalized healthcare by nurses within the community, in settings close to the patient's home and family environment,

with a focus on improving quality of life and socialization of patients and outlining innovative approaches for optimizing the activities of independent nursing practices.

The doctoral candidate in her work examines the regulatory framework of the Republic of Bulgaria and other countries regarding the requirements for establishing, operating, financing independent nursing practices, as well as the documentation and systematization of information related to nursing care for patients.

I consider the topic chosen by Dora Georgieva Vasileva for her dissertation to be timely and of high scientific value. The study of the opportunities and challenges related to independent nursing practices provides guidance for theoretical and practical approaches to organizing information connected to nursing activities and care delivered by nurses practicing independently, aiming to increase awareness, optimize the activities of health professionals, and ensure continuity and coordination of patient care.

5. Awareness of the Problem

The literature review, composed of 63 pages, includes 201 sources, most of which were published in the last 10 years. It is structured into three main sections that chronologically follow the core research tasks set by the doctoral candidate and address different aspects of the problem.

In the literature analysis, the author retrospectively explores the emergence and development of independent nursing practice as a means to meet healthcare needs. The candidate's expertise contributed to a thorough analysis of the current state of the problem. A comparative analysis of the regulatory frameworks and experiences in Bulgaria and other countries regarding health care provision through independent nursing practices is presented — including registration, organization, activities, and requirements for the professional training of health professionals working in such practices.

The main challenges and unresolved issues related to independent nursing practices in Bulgaria are identified. Based on this, there is a clear need to explore possibilities and directions to optimize the activities of nurses practicing independently.

The conclusions drawn from the literature review substantiate the goals and objectives of the dissertation.

6. Research Methodology

The dissertation's objective is clearly and precisely formulated: to investigate the opportunities and challenges related to independent nursing practices and to outline directions for optimizing their operation. Three working hypotheses are set, along with nine tasks that cover various aspects of the problem, allowing for thorough fulfillment of the planned research. The research instruments are self-developed and include two questionnaires — one for patients containing 27 questions and one for nurses also containing 27 questions. Additionally, a 35-

question survey was developed to examine the experience of experts regarding the studied problem and to gather expert assessments of the developed practical approaches.

The research methods used are document analysis, sociological methods, and statistical methods.

7. Results and Discussion

The results of Dora Vasileva's own research are presented in the third chapter of the dissertation. Three groups of respondents were covered: Patients who received nursing care in hospital and outpatient settings – 350 respondents; Nurses working in hospital and outpatient healthcare – 350 respondents; Experts – nurses working through independent nursing practice – 50 respondents. These are grouped into thematic sections following the chronology of the nine set research tasks. The results are analyzed and illustrated with 6 tables and 55 figures.

Based on the analyzed data, the conducted SWOT analysis of the status and development of independent nursing practices in Bulgaria, and her practical professional experience, Dora Georgieva Vasileva presents **innovative practical approaches creating opportunities to overcome the challenges facing nursing care provided by nurses in independent practices.**

A unified **electronic system for documenting and systematizing information related to nursing activities and care provided by nurses in independent nursing practices has been developed.** This system enables accounting and valuation of their work and facilitates the creation of a network of all independent practices.

The author-developed **Model of a unified informed consent form for patients to approve receiving health care and nursing activities performed by a nurse (healthcare specialist) within individual/group nursing practice** is an original document, with a structure and content reflecting all necessary requisites of written informed consent. Dora Vasileva identifies the prerequisite need for upgrading knowledge and skills and proposes a training program for the specialty "Independent Practice in Health Care" within the healthcare system, targeting professionals with qualifications in nursing professions (medical assistants, nurses, midwives, or rehabilitators). The program aims to support the formation of specialized knowledge, skills, and professional competencies related to preventive, therapeutic, rehabilitative, palliative, organizational, and managerial aspects of healthcare provided through independent nursing practices.

The study results provide the basis for **conceptual approaches to financing health activities and care provided by healthcare professionals in independent practices.** These approaches will promote equality in patient access to healthcare and help overcome financial challenges for both patients and health professionals.

Expert evaluation results indicate that the proposed practical approaches are feasible and will be accepted by healthcare professionals. The majority of experts believe they will create opportunities to overcome challenges faced by nursing care in independent practice and emphasize the necessity of their regulatory approval. Based on the research findings and literature analysis, nine conclusions have been formulated, reflecting the study's results. These conclusions generally confirm the fulfillment of the research objectives.

The recommendations and contributions of the dissertation are based on the author's original scientific data. The dissertation is written in good language, with precise terminology. The abstract (author's summary) is 95 pages, presented in three sections and contains the main elements of the conducted research. The results are thoroughly analyzed and clearly presented. The content and quality of the abstract meet the requirements of the Medical University – Varna regulations and adequately reflect the main research findings. Two publications related to the dissertation topic are also presented.

Conclusion:

I consider the dissertation presented by Dora Georgieva Vasileva, titled "Independent Nursing Practice – Opportunities and Challenges," to demonstrate the deep theoretical knowledge and interest of the doctoral candidate in the subject matter. The dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" – Varna.

Therefore, I give a positive assessment and recommend that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury make a decision to award Dora Georgieva Vasileva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public Health, scientific specialty "Health Care Management."

Date: 18.08.2025

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

Prepared by: Assoc. Prof.  Dzhezheva, PhD