

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Kristina Petrova Zaharieva
Ruse University "Angel Kanchev"
Faculty of Public Health and Health Care,
Department of Medical and Clinical-Diagnostic Activities
On the dissertation of Dora Georgieva Vasileva
On the topic

INDEPENDENT NURSING PRACTICE – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Scientific supervisor:
Assoc. Prof. Anna Petrova Georgieva, PhD
For awarding 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"

Procedure information

By Order No. R-109-278 dated 08.07.2021 of Prof. Dr. Valentin Ignatov, MD, Rector of Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov," based on the report of Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Alexandrov, DSc, with entry No. 031-61 dated 17.06.21 and decision of the Academic Council protocol No. 24 of 21.06.21, Dora Georgieva Vasileva was enrolled as a part-time PhD student in the Doctoral Program in "Health Care Management" at the Department of Nursing, Sliven Branch, Medical University – Varna, to obtain the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in higher education field 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public Health. Dissertation topic: "Independent Nursing Practice – Opportunities and Challenges."

Dora Georgieva Vasileva was granted the right to defend by order of the Rector of MU-Varna № R-109-319 dated 24.07.2025.

This opinion is presented in the capacity of a member of the Scientific Jury, selected and approved by the Academic Council of MU-Varna (Protocol № 26 / 21.07.2025) and appointed by Rector's Order № R-109-319 dated 24.07.2025 to ensure the procedure for defense of the dissertation entitled "Independent Nursing Practice – Opportunities and Challenges." By protocol № 1 / 04.08.2025 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I was appointed to present an opinion on the dissertation.

The submitted paper and electronic materials are prepared in accordance with the Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff at Medical University – Varna.

Education and training

After graduating in 1986 from College for health specialists "Dr. N. Nikolaev," Varna, specialty "Pediatric nurse," Dora Vasileva has steadily continued her professional development and training. In 2001, she obtained a Bachelor's degree in "Health Management" at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov," Varna; in 2002, a specialty in "Human Resource Management" at the Economic University, Varna; and in 2010, a Master's degree in "Health Care Management" at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov," Varna.

Professional career

From 1992 to 2018, she worked as a head nurse in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit of UMDHAT "St. Marina" JSC. Since 2017, she has been the manager of the outpatient group practice "The Sisters"

Ltd. in Varna, providing out-of-hospital nursing care, and since 2018, the head nurse in the Pediatric Surgery Department at MPHACT " St. Anna" Varna JSC.

In 2021, Dora Vasileva enrolled as a part-time doctoral student in the Doctoral Program in "Health Care Management" at the Department of Nursing, Sliven Branch, Medical University – Varna. She uses English and Russian languages, possessing competencies and skills to provide quality health care, conduct training and scientific research in health care. Her participation in projects, academic events, and various forms of continuous education attests to her ongoing professional development and improvement.

Dissertation characteristics

The dissertation comprises 204 pages, including 55 figures, 6 tables, 4 appendices, and is structured in four main chapters with the standard structure for the professional field: introduction; chapter one "Literature review"; chapter two "Aims, tasks, materials and methods of the study"; chapter three "Results and discussion"; chapter four "Innovative practical approaches to overcoming challenges in nursing care provided by nurses in independent nursing practices"; conclusions, proposals, contributions, summary, references and appendices. The content corresponds to the topic and reflects the results of the research.

The bibliography includes 201 titles, 109 in Cyrillic and 92 in Latin scripts. The literature sources are thematically relevant and accurately cited according to requirements. The dissertation was reviewed by the Departmental Council of the Department of Nursing at the Sliven Branch and is submitted for public defense.

Evaluation of topic relevance

The dissertation addresses a current, essential, and significant problem, whose relevance is determined by social needs related to the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, limited resources, and rapidly developing technologies leading to difficulties and challenges in healthcare systems worldwide and in Bulgaria. Exploring the opportunities and challenges associated with independent nursing practices and outlining innovative approaches to optimize their activities hold important scientific and practical value. This makes the topic current, interesting, and suitable for dissertation research. The proposed dissertation is the result of long-term and focused work by the doctoral candidate.

In the introduction, the social, scientific, and practical-applied significance of the problem is presented, and the relevance of the topic is well justified.

The literature review in the first chapter is dedicated to various aspects of the researched problem. The candidate offers an analytical and thorough review of the literature. A historical overview of the emergence and development of independent nursing practice as a means to meet healthcare needs is given. The current state of the problem is analyzed. International experience in delivering nursing care through independent practices is presented. The legal framework related to registration, organization, activities, and professional preparation of healthcare specialists for independent nursing practices is explored for France, Canada, and the USA. Additionally, the current state of independent nursing practices in Bulgaria is analyzed in the same logical sequence.

The well-structured literature review and bibliographic data reflect the candidate's excellent knowledge and deep insight into the dissertation topic.

Research methodology

Chapter two presents the aim, objectives, materials, and methodology. The main objective is clearly stated: "To study the opportunities and challenges associated with independent nursing practices and outline directions for optimizing their activities."

Nine tasks are formulated to achieve the aim, reflecting the research activities performed. Hypotheses, subject, object, scope, logical and technical units are defined.

Relevant documentary, sociological, and statistical methods were used, supported by a custom-developed toolkit.

The methodology and organization of the research are thoroughly described.

The study involved 750 respondents aged 18 to 91 (with female predominance in group I), categorized into three groups:

- Group I (350) patients who received nursing care in hospital and outpatient settings;
- Group II (350) nurses working in hospital and outpatient care;
- Group III (50) experts – nurses practicing independently.

The research was carried out in five consecutive stages from July 2021 to June 2025 in hospitals, outpatient care facilities, and outpatient clinics for individual and group nursing practices.

Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Scientific Research at Medical University – Varna (Protocol № 12 / 27.03.2025). The study was independently conducted in five stages.

Research stages

- *Stage 1 (07.2021 – 03.2025)*: Analysis of the problem based on literature, publications, statistics, and regulations; topic, subject, aim, tasks, hypotheses, toolkit, and organization plan formulated.
- *Stage 2 (04.2025 – 05.2025)*: Sociological survey conducted; innovative practical approaches to overcoming challenges in independent nursing practices developed.
- *Stage 3 (05.2025 – 06.2025)*: Data processing and analysis.
- *Stage 4 (06.2025)*: Results of the study described.
- *Stage 5 (06.2025)*: Conclusions and contributions drawn; recommendations formulated for stakeholders to optimize nursing activities and care by independently practicing nurses.

Results and discussion

Chapter three presents the research model, reveals the real state of the practice problem, and provides detailed analysis of results. Theoretical, mathematical, and statistical processing of data and their interpretation are presented.

Respondents' opinions on various aspects of independent nursing practices and potential optimization measures are studied.

The need for postgraduate qualification of healthcare specialists in independent practices is analyzed. Relationships between respondent characteristics and opinions on the issue were investigated.

Chapter four presents innovative practical approaches that create opportunities to overcome challenges faced by nursing care in independent nursing practices. Analysis of results supports the applicability of the proposed approaches in practice to address existing challenges.

Contributions of the dissertation

Theoretical and cognitive contributions:

- Comprehensive research of opportunities and challenges linked to independent nursing practices;
- Thorough analysis of respondents' opinions proving the contribution of independently practicing nurses to quality care and patient acceptance;
- In-depth comparative legal analysis of Bulgarian and foreign legislation related to independent nursing practices;
- Specific recommendations concerning documentation and systematization of nursing care information in independent practices;
- Targeted proposals addressed to the Ministry of Health, Bulgarian Association of Health Professionals, and Medical Universities.

Practical-applied contributions:

- Developed a unified electronic system for documenting and systematizing nursing activities in independent practices;
- Created an original unified patient informed consent form model for nursing care provided in individual/group practices;
- Designed a training program in "Independent Practice for Health Care," essential for enhancing qualifications and professional skills of practicing nurses;
- Proposed an algorithm for establishing outpatient clinics for individual/group nursing practice;
- Developed approaches for financing health activities by nurses in independent nursing practices.

These contributions enrich scientific knowledge and support practice.

Conclusions

Based on the study results, literature analysis, and international experience, nine conclusions are synthesized reflecting the research outcomes and task fulfillment.

I recommend Dora Vasileva to continue work on the topic by preparing informational materials to enhance professional competencies of healthcare professionals working in group outpatient nursing practices and students in the "Nursing" professional field.

The dissertation is well written with precise terminology. The candidate has presented two co-authored publications related to the dissertation. The abstract meets accepted standards, clearly outlining the dissertation content, key results, conclusions, contributions, and recommendations.

Final conclusion

The submitted dissertation, "Independent Nursing Practice – Opportunities and Challenges," demonstrates the candidate's deep command of the subject. I evaluate the topic's significance and timeliness highly. Dora Vasileva did not choose the topic by chance but was guided by her professional experience in healthcare.

During dissertation development, she demonstrated skills in applying scientific research methodology—one of the doctoral training goals. The conducted research meets the set tasks.

Based on the above, I give my positive vote and propose the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to approve awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management" to **Dora Vasileva**.

August 23, 2025

Assoc. Prof. Kristina Zaharieva, PhD

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
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