

REVIEW

By Col. Prof. Ivaylo Vajarov, M.D., PhD

Specialist in Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology and Dietetics

Head of the Varna Military Medical Academy Hospital

regarding the dissertation of Dr. Violeta Dimitrova Snegarova
entitled "Effectiveness of a Low-Histamine Diet in Patients with Irritable Bowel
Syndrome"

for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

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

professional field 7.1. Medicine,

scientific specialty Hygiene

According to Order No. R-109-170/28.03.2025 issued by the Rector of the Medical University – Varna, Prof. Dimitar Raikov, D.Sc., I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury. Based on Protocol No. 1 from the Jury's meeting, I have been assigned to prepare a review within the procedure for the defense of the dissertation of Dr. Violeta Dimitrova Snegarova for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

The documents in the procedure have been submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Medical University – Varna. No procedural violations have been identified.

1. Brief Information on the Professional Development of Dr. Snegarova

Dr. Violeta Snegarova completed her secondary education in 2012 at the Foreign Language High School "Yoan Ekzarh" in Varna, majoring in French. In 2018, she obtained her Master's degree in Medicine from the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna. During her studies, she actively participated in national and international congresses and symposia, mainly in the fields of gastroenterology and dietetics. In the final years of her studies, she also engaged in teaching as a pharmacology demonstrator at the Medical University – Varna.

After graduation, she began working at the Varna Military Hospital under the Military Medical Academy and started her specialization in Gastroenterology. In 2020, she was enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the scientific specialty "Hygiene" at the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology at MU – Varna, under the academic supervision of Prof. Dr. Darina Naydenova.

Over the years, she has acquired additional qualifications through a number of certified courses, including: "Precision and Personalized Medicine in Gastroenterology," "Contemporary Therapy of Chronic Constipation," "Nutrition in Type 2 Diabetes," "Psychosomatic Medicine," "Nutrition in Patients with Depression and Anxiety," and training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. She has also completed continuing e-learning modules with United European Gastroenterology, such as "Neuroendocrine Tumors (NET)."

Her professional work also includes active practice as a resident physician at the Clinical Laboratory "Laborespers 2000."

In 2022, she was awarded a Clinical Fellowship from the United European Gastroenterology society at the University Hospital in Klagenfurt, Austria.

Dr. Snegarova focuses her scientific activity on functional gastrointestinal disorders, nutrigenomics, neurogastroenterology, and psychonutrition. She is the author of 15 scientific publications, including three in journals with an impact factor and five in internationally peer-reviewed journals. She has presented scientific papers and posters at numerous national and international forums, including prestigious events such as UEG Week, ESGE Days, and the Balkan Gastroenterology Congress.

She is actively involved in the professional community as a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association (BMA), the Bulgarian Society of Nutrition and Dietetics (BSND), the Bulgarian Society of Neurogastroenterology and Motility (BSNM), the Association of Young Hepatogastroenterologists in Bulgaria (AYHB), the Bulgarian Association for the Study of Obesity (BASORD), and the Bulgarian Society of Coloproctology.

Since 2022, she has held leadership roles within AYHB and BSNM — serving as the regional representative for Northeastern Bulgaria and as Deputy Chair for Public Relations,

respectively. Among her achievements are her selection as a finalist in the “Young and Energetic Scientist” competition in 2023 and an award from the Karoll Knowledge Foundation’s scholarship program.

Dr. Snegarova’s career is marked by consistency, a strong commitment to scientific work, and a drive to introduce innovation in the fields of clinical and preventive gastroenterology and nutrition.

2. Relevance of the Dissertation

The topic, dedicated to the application of a low-histamine diet in patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), is highly relevant and makes a significant contribution to the ever-expanding field of functional gastroenterology. IBS is one of the most common functional gastrointestinal disorders, characterized by chronic abdominal complaints and altered bowel motility in the absence of an identifiable organic cause. Its prevalence and substantial impact on quality of life, mental health, and healthcare systems necessitate the search for new therapeutic approaches based on pathophysiological understanding and personalized medicine.

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the role of dietary triggers as contributing factors in the pathogenesis and persistence of IBS symptoms. Among these, histamine stands out as a potential key mediator, especially considering its role in modulating intestinal motility, increasing gut permeability, and activating the immune system. The growing interest in the low-histamine diet is a logical step in the pursuit of alternative, more tolerable dietary regimens that may relieve symptoms in patients who are hypersensitive to histamine or who have a deficiency of the enzyme diamine oxidase (DAO).

Scientific research in this area remains limited, which makes the present dissertation especially timely. The lack of consensus regarding the role of histamine and the effectiveness of a low-histamine diet in IBS highlights the need for well-designed interventional studies. Research that monitors both subjective indicators, such as symptom severity and quality of life, and objective markers — including histamine levels and inflammatory mediators — will contribute to a better understanding of disease mechanisms and provide an evidence-based foundation for therapeutic recommendations.

Dr. Snegarova's dissertation has the potential to contribute to the development of personalized dietary strategies tailored to the individual sensitivities of patients and to offer new perspectives in the treatment of IBS that are both effective and realistically applicable in clinical practice. The topic fits well within the contemporary trend toward an interdisciplinary approach between gastroenterology and nutrition science and holds promise for improving care for a significant group of patients.

In conclusion, the research topic is not only current and scientifically justified, but also has potential clinical applicability, contributing to the optimization of therapeutic strategies for patients with IBS.

3. General Characteristics of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of 166 standard pages and includes 28 figures and 5 appendices. The bibliography lists 135 sources, more than 70% of which have been published in the last five years — demonstrating the relevance of the scientific literature used and the author's strong awareness of current research in the field.

The structure of the dissertation meets academic standards and includes:

Introduction – 2 pages; Literature Review – 29 pages; Methodology – 10 pages; Results and Analysis – 28 pages; Discussion – 6 pages; Conclusions – 2 pages; Final Summary – 2 pages; Contributions – 1 page; Appendices – 18 pages; Bibliography – 11 pages.

The volume and organization of the content are appropriate to the objectives of the study and contribute to the clarity and scientific validity of the presented results.

4. Evaluation of the Content of the Structural Components of the Dissertation

The literature review presents a comprehensive overview of the current clinical aspects of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) globally, synthesized with precision and coherence by the author.

The doctoral candidate provides a detailed and analytical presentation of the main aspects of the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of IBS, demonstrating awareness and an analytical approach to the complexity of the condition.

The section dedicated to the pathophysiology of IBS is particularly well developed. It summarizes hypotheses on visceral hypersensitivity, gut–brain axis dysfunction, the influence of stress, and the significance of the gut microbiota. The author demonstrates a deep

understanding of the current scientific literature, skillfully integrating meta-analyses and large-scale studies.

Epidemiological data are comprehensively presented, incorporating both global and national statistics. The author highlights the lack of sufficient research in Bulgaria, which justifies the need for local studies.

In discussing therapeutic approaches, the author examines dietary, pharmacological, and psychotherapeutic options in a holistic manner, emphasizing the need for a personalized approach.

The literature review provides a solid foundation for the research portion of the dissertation. The candidate demonstrates strong theoretical knowledge and scientific justification of the problem.

The methodology section is clearly structured and scientifically sound. The aim and objectives are logically defined. The sample (IBS patients from Varna, aged 18–50) is appropriate, and the tools used (questionnaires, statistical methods) are validated and contemporary. The study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards.

The results show that all three diets led to improvement, but the low-histamine diet produced the most pronounced and lasting effect, including during follow-up. The influence of age, profession, stress, and anxiety on treatment outcomes is analyzed. The statistical methods applied are appropriate, and the results are adequately visualized and interpreted.

The discussion is logical, well-founded, and critically reflective. The author acknowledges the limitations of the study (e.g., absence of a control group, use of self-reported tools) and offers clear directions for future research.

The conclusions are coherent, supported by data, and practically oriented. The potential of the low-histamine diet as an effective therapeutic strategy for IBS is emphasized. The dissertation combines original findings with confirmations of existing data, making it a valuable contribution to scientific literature.

The final summary is well-argued and underlines the necessity of a holistic approach in the treatment of IBS. The author demonstrates excellent scientific training, and the dissertation makes a significant contribution both theoretically and practically.

Evaluation of the Dissertation's Contributions

I fully accept the stated conclusions, final summary, and contributions of the dissertation.

Critical Remarks

There are no grounds for critical remarks.

5. Conclusion

I evaluate the work as fully compliant with the requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field of "Medicine," scientific specialty "Hygiene."

Dr. Violeta Snegarova's profound clinical and scientific knowledge justifies my positive review. I believe that the candidate meets the criteria for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty Hygiene, within the professional field of Medicine.

12.05.2019г.

Member of the Scientific Jury:

Col. Prof. Ivaylo Vajarov, M.D., PhD

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