

REVIEW

from

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*Appointed as an external member of the Scientific Jury
according to **Order No. R -109-284 /01.07.2025** of the Rector of the Medical
University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna*

Subject: Procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic:
"Management of pain syndrome in gynecological practice" for the award of the
educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 7.
Health and Sports, professional field 7.4. Public Health, scientific specialty
"Health Care Management"

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order No. R-109-304/16.07.2021.

Research supervisors: **Assoc. Prof. Valya Dimitrova, Doctor of Public Health.**
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General presentation of the procedure

The administrative documents and materials presented to me for review have
been prepared and presented in accordance with the Law on the Development of
the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations thereto, and the
Regulations on the Development of the Scientific Staff at the Medical University
- Varna. They have been prepared precisely and I believe that they fully comply
with the requirements of the regulatory framework.

Curriculum vitae and career development of the doctoral student

Zoya Goranova was born on February 11, 1952 in Sofia City. In 1973, she graduated as a midwife at the Medical School for Midwives and Rehabilitators in Sofia. In 2008, she upgraded her education at the Medical University of Sofia, with a Bachelor's degree in the same specialty, and in 2017, she obtained a Master's degree in Health Care Management. From 1991 to the present, she has been working as a therapist with Chinese treatment methods in private practice at the Outpatient Clinic for Non-Conventional Methods of Impact on Individual Health.

Zoya Goranova holds a number of certificates for additional qualification in acupuncture from universities and colleges in Beijing, Republic of China. She has conducted trainings in acupuncture and moxibustion, cupping therapy, auriculotherapy, Chinese massage, guasha, etc. in Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Latvia.

She is a member of the Board of Directors of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS) and a member of the Board of Education for Chinese Medicine. She is the Chairman of the Bulgarian Association of Acupuncture and Physiotherapists.

The doctoral student is an authorized teacher of Chinese medicine at Jiangxi University of Chinese Medicine - Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, for Bulgaria, the Balkan Peninsula, Cyprus (more than 10 years).

The candidate's educational and career development undoubtedly show that she possesses significant professional experience and is establishing herself as a competent specialist in her professional field.

The candidate has an active scientific profile in ORCID, Coogole Scholar and other scientific databases, which is an indicator of increasing the visibility of publications in the scientific community. The reference for similarity between the candidate's scientific works and internet sources guarantees the reliability and credibility of the author's production.

Content and structure of the dissertation

The dissertation presented by the doctoral student follows the classical structure of a similar scientific work and is 198 pages long (160 main text), with the separate internal parts of the work being logically organized and interconnected. It includes an introduction, a literature review, a goal, tasks, a hypothesis and research methodology, results of own research, conclusions, a conceptual model, recommendations, a conclusion and contributions. It is illustrated with 17 figures and 46 informative tables presenting the results of the study and providing clarity on the research problem. The dissertation has a clear

and scientific style, with specifically used scientific terminology. The bibliography includes 236 literary sources, mainly from foreign authors. The doctoral student also presents 8 appendices related to the research tools.

In connection with her dissertation, Zoya Goranova has presented 4 publications and 1 participation in a scientific forum.

Relevance and importance of the topic

The promotion and prevention of women's health is an important part of public health. Health promotion has led to the emergence of new concepts and methods for strengthening women's health, which will contribute to a stable and prolonged fertile age.

Research work is aimed at revealing an opportunity for the protection of women's health. The doctoral student examines a problem related to the prevention of pain syndrome in gynecology. Chronic pain in gynecology can have long-term effects on the female body, including reduced fertility, sexual dysfunction and psychological consequences, such as depression and anxiety. Dysmenorrhea in particular is such a serious medical and social problem. This implies searching for and supplementing its prevention and treatment with new non-drug means for practice, namely with physical non-traditional methods, such as acupuncture and moxotherapy. These methods complement treatment and provide a more holistic approach to managing menstrual pain and benefit the health and improve the quality of life of women.

The relevance of the issues in this dissertation is determined by the need for studies tracking the role and importance of health-promoting activities and the prophylactic possibilities of unconventional means used in the treatment of pain syndrome in gynecology.

The scientific value of the dissertation stems from the fact that the problem is examined multidimensionally and the contributions from research in this area will contribute to reducing and overcoming the negative effects affecting the physical and mental health of women during a painful menstrual cycle.

Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work

The introduction convincingly justifies the relevance of the problem and Zoya Goranova's motivation for choosing the topic of the dissertation.

The doctoral student has presented a comprehensive **literature review**, structured logically and systematically in a volume of 41 pages, which demonstrates scientific awareness and competence in the issues to which she has directed her research interest. The analysis is structured in several sections, which step by step present the individual aspects of the research problem.

The review begins with basic data relating to pain syndrome in gynecology. The symptoms of various conditions associated with complaints in the lower abdomen in women are examined in detail, with special attention paid to dysmenorrhea. Its essence, classification and clinical manifestation are deduced. Dysmenorrhea in particular is a serious medical and social problem. This suggests the search for and complementing of prophylaxis and treatment with new non-drug remedies for practice.

In a separate section, the pain syndrome according to unconventional medicine (resp. Chinese traditional medicine) is described. The theoretical foundations of acupuncture and moxibustion are analyzed in detail through the prism of modern knowledge. The author summarizes various results from numerous studies and presents in detail the mechanism of acupuncture analgesia and its beneficial effect on dysmenorrhea.

The logically structured literature review reveals the doctoral student's broad competencies in the field of the problem under consideration.

Evaluation of the goal, objectives and methodology

Based on the analyzed data in the literature, doctoral student Zoya Goranova has clearly defined the purpose of her dissertation work – *to investigate and evaluate the possibilities of Chinese treatment methods – acupuncture, moxitherapy and auriculotherapy, suitable for managing pain syndrome in patients with dysmenorrhea*. The tasks are logical, relevant to the purpose of the study, and with their solution the work gains completeness and completeness. The two working hypotheses formulated are specific and clear. The sequence of stages in the study are accurately and clearly described, so they allow a correct understanding of the essence of the actions performed. The methodological approach is sufficiently comprehensive, allows for the collection of high-value data and the achievement of the set goals and objectives.

In the conducted own empirical study, the subject of the study were 44 respondents with pain syndrome due to dysmenorrhea. The respondents were selected voluntarily, distributed into two groups (experimental – 22 people and control – 22 people). The control group was applied conventional treatment with analgesics, and the experimental group was carried out a treatment program in 3-6 courses, compiled by the doctoral student on the methods of Chinese medicine with acupuncture, moxibustion and auriculotherapy, tailored to the characteristics of their organism. The study was conducted in two stages – *preliminary* - for information about the essence, goals and organization of the study, the necessary

studies, the expected benefits, as well as the possible risks and inconveniences of its conduct and *II Stage – main* - carrying out the diagnostic and therapeutic algorithm within the framework of the treatment program.

The statistical approaches during sample selection, as well as the overall statistical analysis of the results, are precise and appropriately illustrated.

Evaluation of research results

The third chapter represents the essence of the dissertation work. The doctoral student begins her research with a brief explanatory dictionary of the main concepts in Chinese traditional medicine and a theoretical-practical analysis of the physiological features and pathology of the female organism in the fertile age according to the theory of Chinese medicine. A very detailed algorithm of the experimental treatment methodology has been prepared and presented. Two acupuncture recipes for corporal therapy and auriculotherapy, applied for treatment, are described in detail and well-illustrated on 4 clinical cases. From the analysis of the results obtained from the respondents in these cases, the doctoral student proves that the methods acupuncture, moxibustion and auriculotherapy are a necessary alternative in modern clinical practice.

The data from the own study of the two groups (control G1 and experimental - G2) respondents are adequately analyzed and presented in a logical sequence. The results are supported by detailed structured figures or detailed tables, which present the obtained data in a more synthesized form, ensuring their correct perception and understanding.

In the discussion, Z. Goranova makes a detailed analysis of the results of the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) for the intensity of the painful sensation (0-10) before and after each course (6 courses). She proves that the six-course treatment plan is very effective in progressively reducing the pain of dysmenorrhea, ultimately eliminating it completely in all 22 patients. The data from the correlation analysis also show a significant increase in all areas and in particular in the quality of life after treatment, which is a result of the applied experimental methodology. The study establishes statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of a significant improvement in the quality of life of the individuals from the experimental group.

The precise statistical processing of the data and the analysis performed allow the doctoral student to justify the need to implement a conceptual model for training midwives, including basic knowledge of acupuncture and moxibustion, as well as their practical application in activities related to women's health. The

model primarily emphasizes safe practice, competence, and evidence-based integration of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with conventional medicine.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the analysis and research conducted in the dissertation, 5 conclusions are justified and logically systematized, which provide a complete picture of the results of the research work. The conclusions are specific, but at the same time comprehensive and fully reflect the most important conclusions obtained from the study.

Of particular importance are the recommendations made for prophylaxis in gynecological and obstetric practice, and effective pain management in patients with severe dysmenorrhea, using the methods of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The doctoral student also makes recommendations to educational institutions for additional training and postgraduate qualification in acupuncture and moxibustion for midwives.

Evaluation of contributions

I fully accept the scientific contributions that the results of the study and the formulated conclusions outline:

Theoretical and methodological contributions:

1. Defining the essential features and main characteristics of the pain syndrome, or dysmenorrhea, based on a thorough study of modern specialized literature (about 95% Chinese and American).
2. The systematized literature review has a theoretical and applied contribution that enables specialists to use a valuable alternative for the management/treatment of pain syndrome in gynecology, or dysmenorrhea, with the methods of Chinese medicine - acupuncture, moxibustion, auriculotherapy.
3. For the first time in Bulgarian research practice, an analysis of the physiological characteristics and pathology of the female organism in the fertile age according to the theory of Chinese medicine has been carried out.
4. For the first time in Bulgarian research practice, an analysis of the healing principles in gynecology according to Chinese medicine has been carried out.

5. For the first time in Bulgarian research practice, an analysis of the theoretical and therapeutic principles regarding dysmenorrhea according to Chinese medicine has been presented.
6. For the first time, treatment program options according to Chinese medicine were specifically discussed, as well as preventive measures for dysmenorrhea were presented.
7. For the first time, an author's specialized Chinese medical dictionary has been compiled with a detailed interpretation of terms, which facilitates the reading of specialized texts.
8. For the first time, an interpretation of the recipes according to the theory of Chinese medicine has been presented.

Practical contributions:

9. A proprietary treatment algorithm has been created and tested, and the methodology has been structured, depending on the patient's differentiated syndrome, for the treatment of dysmenorrhea with acupuncture, moxibustion and auriculotherapy, which is based on the theoretical and therapeutic principles of classical Chinese medicine. Its complex impact on the severity and intensity of pain in women with dysmenorrhea, as well as on the restoration of quality of life, has been studied.
10. An algorithm for individual treatment of four case studies participating in the experiment was derived, and the effect of their treatment was analyzed according to the theory of Chinese medicine, and the therapeutic concept was discussed.
11. The advantages of periodically applying Chinese medicine methods are highlighted, based on the treatment courses conducted between monthly menstruations to manage pain and balance the quality of life of suffering women, and recommendations are proposed in this direction.
12. For the first time in pedagogical practice, a conceptual model has been compiled to optimize the role of the midwife in managing pain syndrome in gynecology through the use of Chinese treatment methods - acupuncture, moxibustion and auriculotherapy.

Assessment of dissertation publications

Doctoral student Zoya Goranova presents 4 publications related to the topic of the dissertation, presented in peer-reviewed journals and 1 participation in the National Health Care Forum.

Abstract

The presented abstract, in a volume of 92 pages, is drawn up in accordance with legal requirements, with high quality illustrative material, and reflects the dissertation work concisely, correctly, and completely.

Personal participation of the doctoral student

In the proposed dissertation, doctoral student Zoya Goranova has full participation and all conclusions, contributions and results obtained are her personal merit.

CONCLUSION

The presented dissertation "Management of Pain Syndrome in Gynecological Practice" by doctoral student Zoya Goranova fulfills all the requirements of a completed doctoral dissertation - with clearly defined goals and objectives, adequately selected methodology, competent analysis and contributions with theoretical and applied-practical significance, which fully meets the criteria of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at MU (Medical University) - Varna.

The dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral student possesses in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge and demonstrates the qualities and skills to independently conduct scientific research.

Based on the comprehensive evaluation of the dissertation work and the abstract, **I give my positive assessment** and propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" to **Zoya Kirilova Goranova** in the professional field 7.4 Public Health from the field of higher education 7. Health and Sports and the scientific specialty "Health Care Management".

07.09.2025

Review drawn

Prof. Delyana Hadzhidarova, PhD

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