

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Katya Genova Eguruze, PhD
Department of Health Care
Faculty of Public Health
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regarding the dissertation thesis of Zoya Kirilova Goranova

entitled: PAIN SYNDROME MANAGEMENT IN GYNECOLOGICAL PRACTICE

for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"
in the field of higher education 7. Health and Sports
professional field 7.4. Public Health
specialty "Health Care Management"

With scientific supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Valya Ivanova Dimitrova, PhD; Prof. Dr. Paraskeva Mancheva Draganova, DMSc

By Order No. R-109-284/01.07.2025 of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury, and based on Protocol No. 1/03.07.2025 from the first meeting held, I was assigned to prepare an opinion as part of the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" to **Zoya Kirilova Goranova**.

Procedure Details

Zoya Kirilova Goranova was enrolled as an independent (self-paced) PhD student in the doctoral program "Health Care Management", in the field of higher education 7. Health and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public Health, by Order No. R-109-304/16.07.2021 of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna.

Based on a report with ref. No. 102-1467/11.06.2025 by Assoc. Prof. Katya Genova Eguruze, PhD – Head of the Department of Health Care, a decision was made according to Protocol No. 246/20.06.2025 of the Faculty Council, and a subsequent report with ref. No. 104-888/25.06.2025 by the Dean of the Faculty of Public Health. As a result, she was discharged with the right to defend her dissertation, by Order No. R-109-284 dated 01.07.2025 of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna.

All required documents, as stipulated by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its Implementing Regulations, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University - Varna, have been duly submitted.

Biographical Data and Career Development of the Doctoral Candidate

Zoya Kirilova Goranova was born on February 11, 1952, in Sofia, Bulgaria. In 1973, she graduated from the Medical School for Midwives and Rehabilitators in Sofia with a

specialization in *Midwifery*, earning a secondary medical education degree. Between 2006 and 2008, she obtained a Bachelor's degree in *Midwifery* from the Medical College – Sofia, affiliated with the Medical University - Sofia. In 2017, she was awarded a Master's degree in *Health Care Management* from the Medical University - Sofia.

Between 1989 and 2025, she completed numerous courses and obtained a qualification in acupuncture from several universities of Traditional Chinese Medicine in China, which has significantly shaped her professional path. From 1991 to 1999, she worked as a therapist specializing in Chinese methods of treatment at a Center for Chinese Medicine in Sofia. Since 2005 to the present day, she has been practicing as a therapist in Chinese healing methods at an Outpatient Clinic for Non-Conventional Methods for Beneficial Impact on Individual Health in Sofia.

Zoya Goranova is an authorized lecturer in Chinese Medicine for Bulgaria, the Balkan Peninsula, and Cyprus (for over 10 years) on behalf of Jiangxi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine - Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, and has provided supporting documentation for this.

She has conducted training sessions in acupuncture and moxibustion, cupping therapy, auriculotherapy, Chinese massage, gua sha, and others in Greece, Cyprus, Russia, and Latvia.

She participates in congresses and scientific forums and has publications and scientific presentations related to her research interests.

She has excellent command of Russian, and intermediate knowledge of English and Chinese.

General Characteristics of the Dissertation

The dissertation is presented in a total volume of 198 pages and is structured into three chapters as follows: Introduction; Chapter One – Literature Review; Chapter Two – Aim, Objectives, and Hypotheses. Subject, Object, and Design of the Scientific Study. Research Methods; Chapter Three – Results and Discussion. Conclusions. Conceptual Model for Training and Optimizing the Role of the Midwife in Obstetrics and Gynecology through the Use of Chinese Treatment Methods – Acupuncture and Moxibustion. Contributions. Recommendations. Conclusion. Bibliography. Eight appendices and acknowledgments.

The work is richly illustrated with 20 figures, 46 tables, and 17 graphs. The bibliography includes 236 literary sources, of which 19 are in Cyrillic, 162 in Latin script, and 55 in Chinese characters.

Assessment of the Relevance of the Topic

The importance of pain is undeniable, as it is one of the most common symptoms in numerous diseases. It is highly subjective because the sensation of pain is strictly individual. The same pain stimulus can provoke different reactions in different people. Pain is a companion to many diseases in gynecological practice and, besides physical discomfort, it can lead to psycho-emotional suffering in women. Managing pain syndrome in gynecology is a current and priority issue due to its high frequency in gynecological interventions and diseases. Underestimating it in clinical practice carries the risk of inadequate pain relief. Pain has a serious impact on the quality of life, fertility, and mental health of women. New clinical guidelines from leading international organizations set standards for better assessment and control of pain in outpatient gynecological procedures. Its control and management would

demonstrate better outcomes through skillful application of pharmacological and non-pharmacological pain relief methods.

Effective pain management in gynecological practice requires a comprehensive approach based on the existing symptoms, medical history of each woman related to medical practices and interventions, in order to address the pain associated with a given gynecological problem. This makes the topic of Zoya Goranova's dissertation significant, relevant, and dissertation-worthy.

Assessment of the Structure of the Dissertation

The literature review is structured into two main parts that consecutively and thoroughly trace the key aspects related to the problem researched by the doctoral candidate. The analysis of the carefully selected scientific information is competently directed towards the needs of the specific study.

The literature review begins with an examination of pain in gynecology according to conventional medicine. The author has very precisely presented the different types of pain, which brings clarity to the issue under consideration.

The doctoral candidate has exhaustively researched and presented dysmenorrhea, which ranks among the top gynecological diseases in terms of its pain manifestation. Several theories regarding the etiology of dysmenorrhea are presented, with the timing of its onset linked to various factors, both physiological and psychological.

Special attention is given to conventional medicine, which uses medications, medical or surgical interventions, physiotherapy, natural and preformed physical factors, kinesitherapy, and rehabilitation for the treatment of dysmenorrhea.

In the second part of the literature review, Zoya Goranova considers pain in gynecology from the perspective of unconventional medicine (specifically Traditional Chinese Medicine). Several theories explaining the mechanism of acupuncture are presented in particular.

The rich professional experience of the doctoral candidate aids in a thorough analysis of the application and benefits of unconventional methods such as acupuncture and moxibustion, which are the oldest traditional healing therapies in China, as well as the use of techniques like cupping therapy, auriculotherapy, and others. Zoya Goranova concludes that pain relief can be achieved through a combination of these therapeutic methods and that acupuncture is the primary treatment method proven to be more effective in pain relief.

The literature review and bibliography demonstrate the doctoral candidate's good knowledge of the subject matter.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is thoroughly developed and includes: aim, objectives and hypotheses, subject, object, study design, and research methods. The aim of the dissertation is clearly and specifically defined: "To investigate and evaluate the possibilities of Chinese treatment methods - acupuncture, moxibustion, and auriculotherapy - suitable for managing pain syndrome in patients with dysmenorrhea."

Nine objectives have been outlined to achieve the aim, covering all aspects of the research conducted by Zoya Goranova. Two working hypotheses have been formulated.

The organization of the study is accurately described and includes: subject, object of the research, and study design. The design encompasses the entire process of carrying out the research work, which is presented in detail. The experiment was conducted in two stages: preliminary and main. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion have been established. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Scientific Research at the Medical University of Varna with Protocol No. 119 dated 21.07.2022.

The tools used in the original research are carefully selected and tailored to the specifics of data collection, and they are thoroughly described and presented in the dissertation.

The doctoral candidate employed a wide range of methods appropriate for achieving the aim: documentary method, clinical examination methods, sociological methods, and statistical methods for data processing and analysis.

Results and Discussion

The dissertation presents the results obtained from the conducted study, following their statistical processing. The results are structured and logically organized in the third chapter.

The doctoral candidate has provided a terminology glossary to clarify concepts that are not commonly used in conventional scientific literature but are specific to Traditional Chinese Medicine, which facilitates the reading.

Zoya Goranova has conducted a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the physiological characteristics and pathology of the female body during the reproductive age according to the theory of Chinese medicine. The factors related to the occurrence of various gynecological diseases according to this theory are described.

The therapeutic principles in gynecology according to Chinese medicine are presented and analyzed, which allows the doctoral candidate to conclude that the treatment of gynecological and obstetric conditions in Traditional Chinese Medicine includes both oral preparations (natural products) and physical methods. The different treatment methods complement each other, have almost no side effects, and are considered safer (oral natural products and natural physical methods), as they rely on the active involvement of the body's self-healing mechanisms.

An analysis has been conducted on the theoretical and therapeutic principles regarding dysmenorrhea according to Chinese medicine. This section outlines key criteria for identifying abdominal pain related to the pain's topography, duration, and qualities. Depending on the type of syndrome, the doctoral candidate has proposed two variants of treatment programs according to Chinese medicine, emphasizing that the proposed methods are suitable for treating dysmenorrhea.

In the third part of this chapter, the doctoral candidate presents an experimental therapeutic formula developed based on the theoretical principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The methodology for composing the therapeutic formula is described. Drawing on her clinical experience, the doctoral candidate has borrowed and adapted experimental treatment methods from numerous ancient and modern Chinese healers, for which a work algorithm has been developed. The stages of the research and treatment process are clearly and comprehensively presented, with a notable application of an individualized approach for each patient. A protocol has been developed with acupuncture points, which are distributed into two main prescriptions (for the frontal and dorsal sides of the body).

Four clinical cases of women of different ages suffering from dysmenorrhea are described. After conducting the experiment and based on the analysis and obtained results, the doctoral candidate concludes that the methods of acupuncture, moxibustion, and auriculotherapy are a necessary alternative in modern clinical practice for managing pain and eliminating accompanying symptoms before and during menstruation.

In the fourth part, the results of an original study involving 44 patients are presented. These patients were divided into two groups (experimental - 22 individuals and control - 22 individuals) with pain syndrome resulting from dysmenorrhea, selected on a voluntary basis. The timeframe and location of the study are detailed, and the experimental work was conducted in two well-described stages. The participants were treated with a program developed by the doctoral candidate according to their syndrome, using Chinese medicine methods - acupuncture, moxibustion, and auriculotherapy - tailored to the specifics of their bodies. Each patient underwent an extended specialized anamnesis consisting of 10 questions. An individual outpatient card was developed to record the experimental process.

A statistical analysis was conducted on the use of analgesics for pain management, and an assessment of dysmenorrhea severity was made using a verbal multidimensional rating system. The intensity of the painful sensation before and after each treatment course was evaluated using a visual analog scale.

Zoya Goranova presents the results for the experimental group G2 (n=22), which received acupuncture, moxibustion, and auriculotherapy. The data obtained allow the doctoral candidate to conclude that the six-course treatment plan demonstrated a progressive reduction of pain in dysmenorrhea, leading to its complete elimination in all patients. The applied experimental methodology conclusively showed nearly an 80% improvement, proving that effective pain management significantly enhances the quality of life in women with dysmenorrhea.

I highly commend the developed Conceptual Model for training and optimizing the role of midwives in obstetrics and gynecology through the use of Chinese treatment methods - acupuncture and moxibustion.

Conclusions, Contributions, and Recommendations

Specific conclusions are stated that logically follow from the preceding analysis. Five conclusions are formulated, accurately reflecting the obtained results and demonstrating consistency with the aim and objectives of the presented dissertation.

The contributions of the dissertation are of both theoretical-methodological and practical-applied nature, which I accept.

The recommendations made are convincing and directly related to the problem under consideration.

In connection with the dissertation, the doctoral candidate presents a list of publications containing four titles related to the dissertation topic and one participation in a scientific forum.

The abstract is structured according to the requirements and reliably reflects the content of the dissertation.

Conclusion The dissertation stands out for its relevance, precision, high scientific value, and undeniable practical significance. I consider that it meets all the requirements of the Law

on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its Implementing Rules, and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University - Varna.

The dissertation demonstrates that Zoya Goranova possesses deep theoretical knowledge and professional skills, proving her strong potential for scientific research work.

Based on the above, I give my positive vote and confidently recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Zoya Kirilova Goranova the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the specialty of "Health Care Management."

11.09.2025

Prepared by:

Assoc. Prof. Katya Genova Eguruze, PhD

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