

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Hristo Vasilev Kozhuharov, MD

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Faculty of Medicine, Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" Varna.

of a dissertation for the acquisition of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Author of the dissertation: Dr. Danko Tonev Avramov, doctoral student at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" Varna

Topic of the dissertation: "Dynamics of diagnosis in patients with a first psychotic episode after using psychoactive substances".

Scientific supervisor: Dr. Deyan Khrusafov, MD, Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" Varna.

Scientific field: Psychiatry (code 03.01.20);

Professional field: 7.1 Medicine;

Legal basis: This review has been prepared in accordance with Order No. P-109-517/16.12=2025 of the Rector of Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov Medical University, Varna, appointing a Scientific Jury to conduct a public defense of the dissertation.

1. General characteristics of the dissertation:

The dissertation contains 149 pages, illustrated with 43 tables and 60 figures, including five appendices. The bibliography covers 201 sources, of which 11 are in Cyrillic and 190 in Latin.

The abstract presented is 70 pages long and is a summary of the dissertation. It accurately summarises the main content of the dissertation.

The structure and formatting of the dissertation and the abstract meet the requirements of MU Varna for this type of scientific publication for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor". The dissertation includes the following sections: introduction; literature review; objectives, tasks and working hypotheses of the study; materials and methods; results and discussion; conclusions and summary; list of references and appendices with tables and figures.

2. Brief biographical information

The author of the dissertation, Dr. Danko Tonev Avramov, graduated with a degree in Medicine in 2019 from Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov Medical University in Varna. Since the same year, he has been working as a doctor at the Second Psychiatric Clinic at the University Hospital "Sveta Marina" EAD Varna. From 09.03.2020 to 09.03.2025, he is an assistant at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, working as a teaching doctor to date. He has been enrolled as a doctoral student in psychiatry since 2021. He will obtain a specialisation in Psychiatry in 2024. His scientific interests are in the field of biological psychiatry and psychopharmacology. He has two scientific publications related to the topic of his dissertation, as well as presentations at national conferences.

2. Relevance and significance of the topic

The relevance of the topic is related to the observed steady increase in drug use and diversity in Bulgaria, as well as the increase in the number of registered mental disorders induced by drugs. The dynamics of diagnosis in patients with a first psychotic episode due to the use of psychoactive substances is a topical and insufficiently studied problem in Bulgarian psychiatry. The choice of the research topic stands out with its important contemporary scientific and practical significance.

3. Research objectives, tasks and methodology

The study design meets contemporary requirements for scientific research. The objectives, tasks and working hypotheses are clearly and concisely formulated and correspond to the topic of the dissertation.

The study was designed as a longitudinal, prospective study with a two-year follow-up period. Despite the small sample size of 81 patients, the data obtained are sufficient to obtain statistically significant results by applying the presented modern processing methods. A positive aspect is the inclusion of patients from outpatient psychiatric care in the study and control groups, which ensures a broader representativeness of the sample and increases the reliability of the results obtained.

All ethical aspects were complied with in the study, in accordance with the requirements for conducting scientific research at the Medical University of Varna.

4. Discussion

The introduction to the dissertation discusses the relevance of the topic and its scientific and practical significance, as well as the objectives set in the study.

This literature review systematically examines the concept of first psychotic episode in terms of its definition, clinical characteristics and dynamics. It presents both the development and

conceptualisation in the history of psychiatry and in the light of contemporary classification systems (ICD-10, DSM-5 and ICD-11). Special attention is paid to the contribution of the Bulgarian school of psychiatry.

The literature review presents in detail the different types of psychoactive substances and their psychotropic effects, with an emphasis on the relationship between the first appearance of psychotic symptoms and the type of substance. The diagnostic criteria for a psychotic episode induced by the use of PAS are presented both in the text and in tabular form. The literature review cites numerous data from contemporary scientific publications on the subject. The most commonly used contemporary tools for screening and early diagnosis of psychotic symptoms in psychoactive substance use are presented.

The section "Materials and Methods" describes in detail the object of the study, the criteria for inclusion and exclusion from the study and control groups, and the methods for collecting empirical data. The limitations and difficulties encountered during the study are also outlined.

The research methods used are modern and carefully selected, including both classic clinical psychiatric examination and standardised assessment tools and questionnaires, clinical laboratory tests and combined urine tests for psychoactive substances. The statistical processing of the data is detailed, using various modern statistical methods, which allows for a reliable interpretation of the results. Part of the data obtained has been processed using additional statistical methods, due to the small sample size, in order to achieve higher reliability of the results. Statistical processing includes demographic analysis and analysis of clinical characteristics, comparative analysis between the two groups, correlation analysis and interrelationships between variables, analysis of PANSS subscales and GAF results. The discussion focuses on the statistical significance of the results and their clinical significance, as well as on the degree of clinical and functional improvement in both groups. Although not set as a goal of the study, a recommendation could be formulated to establish the relationship between the different types of psychoactive substances and the characteristics of the clinical picture and its dynamics in the study group.

The analysis of the results and conclusions confirms the initial thesis that the use of psychoactive substances is a significant modifying factor in the development and course of psychotic disorders and has an adverse effect on the severity of psychosis, the number of hospitalisations, the degree of recovery and the quality of life.

The discussion and final conclusions confirm a significant part of the initial hypotheses and demonstrate the applicability of standardized psychometric instruments (PANSS, GAF, DAST-10) in Bulgarian clinical practice. The study reveals statistically and clinically significant differences in first-episode psychosis with and without psychoactive substance use in terms of diagnosis dynamics, clinical severity, number of hospitalisations, and degree of functional recovery.

The author has outlined the main limitations of the study – the need to include neuropsychological assessments in future studies, as well as the relatively small sample size and insufficient follow-up period, which is supported by data from other psychiatric studies with a similar design.

5. Scientific contributions

The chosen topic of the dissertation is definitely significant, both from a scientific-theoretical point of view and from an applied-practical one. The research is thorough and in-depth and is illustrated with many additional visual materials – graphs, figures and tables. The results and conclusions of the study have direct clinical applicability in contemporary psychiatric clinical practice and can contribute to the improvement of the diagnostic and therapeutic approach in patients with a first psychotic episode after the use of psychoactive substances.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations

Some of the limitations mentioned by the author in the course of the study can also be formulated as recommendations for future scientific research on this topic – a larger sample size and a longer study period.

A recommendation could be to establish and discuss the relationship between the different types of psychoactive substances and the characteristics of the clinical picture and its dynamics in the study group.

7. Conclusion

The presented dissertation is distinguished by its comprehensiveness, completeness, independent contribution and significant scientific value, fully meeting the criteria for medical scientific research at the Medical University of Varna for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor". The author has demonstrated good clinical knowledge and skills in working with and interpreting scientific data in accordance with the contemporary requirements of medical science.

In view of the above, I propose that the esteemed scientific jury award Dr Danko Tonev Avramov the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the scientific field of "Psychiatry".

Date:.....

Reviewer:

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
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