

## OPINION

by: Prof. Georgi Panov Panov, MD, DSc

Faculty of Medicine, Trakia University, Stara Zagora

regarding a dissertation for the acquisition of the 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

Dissertation topic: "Dynamics of diagnosis in patients with first psychotic episode after psychoactive substance use"

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dean Hrousafov, MD, PhD, Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" Varna

Scientific specialty: Psychiatry (code 03.01.20)

### **1. Relevance and significance of the topic**

The topic of the dissertation is of high medical, social, and scientific significance. The increasing frequency of psychoactive substance use and related psychotic disorders presents serious diagnostic and prognostic challenges to modern psychiatry. Differentiating between a primary psychotic disorder and a substance-induced psychosis is of key importance for the therapeutic strategy and long-term prognosis.

Monitoring the diagnostic dynamics over time is a particularly valuable aspect of the development, as it allows for the assessment of diagnostic stability and the risk of chronicity.

### **2. General characteristics and analysis of the dissertation**

The dissertation is structured sequentially and logically, with strict adherence to academic standards. The literature review is analytical and demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of international classification systems and contemporary concepts of the first psychotic episode.

The study encompasses 81 patients, divided into a study group and a control group, which allows for a comparative analysis of the clinical dynamics. An earlier onset of psychosis by 3-4 years was found in patients using psychoactive substances, as well as a predominance of induced psychoses (F19) at the beginning of the follow-up period.

The analysis of the results shows statistically significant relationships between the duration of substance use, the severity of symptoms, and the number of hospitalizations. Diagnostic transformation in some patients – a transition to schizophrenia spectrum disorders – was traced, which has significant prognostic value.

Particularly valuable is the analysis of psychopathological dynamics, where the reduction of positive symptoms is associated with a statistically significant improvement in global

functioning (GAF), while negative and cognitive symptoms demonstrate slower regression and a more lasting impact on social adaptation.

The dissertation is distinguished by a good integration between quantitative statistical analysis and the clinical interpretation of the results, which testifies to an analytical and mature scientific approach.

### **3. Main scientific contributions**

- Empirical proof of statistically and clinically significant differences between patients with and without psychoactive substance use;
- Establishment of an earlier onset of psychotic decompensation in patients using psychoactive substances;
- Demonstration of a diagnostic transition to chronic schizophrenia spectrum disorders;
- Establishing a relationship between the duration of substance use, the severity of psychosis, and the frequency of hospitalizations;
- Demonstrating the role of positive symptomatology as a predictor of remission and functional recovery;
- Practical validation of psychometric instruments (PANSS, GAF, DAST-10) in Bulgarian clinical settings.

The contributions have both scientific-theoretical significance and direct clinical applicability.

### **4. Notes and recommendations**

The limitations related to the sample size and the duration of follow-up outline opportunities for future research with a larger scope and long-term perspective. The dissertation did not conduct an analysis of the differences in therapeutic approaches for the two patient groups, nor were there any resulting recommendations for future, more adapted therapeutic algorithms for them. I strongly hope that Dr. Avramov's work will continue in the same direction and with the same energy in the future, developing the idea of the dissertation further, including into the specific therapeutic modalities for the different patient groups.

### **5. Conclusion**

Overall, the dissertation represents an independent, methodologically sound, and analytically developed scientific study. The author demonstrates a high degree of clinical and scientific competence.

I believe that the dissertation fully meets the requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Psychiatry".

I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Dr. Danko Tonev Avramov.

Date: 23/02/26

Prepared the opinion: Prof. Georgi Panov Panov, MD, DSc

Signature

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