

STATEMENT

From Assoc. Prof. Pepa Miteva Dzhedzheva, PhD in Health Care

Department of Health Care, Sliven Branch

at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury according to Order No. R-109-149 of 26.03.2026 by the

Rector of the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna

Subject: Procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor (PhD)"
In the field of Higher Education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public
Health, specialty: Health Care Management

of **Denislav Krasimirov Ivanov** – doctoral student in an independent form of study

**Thesis topic: Application of Medical Dry Needling in Subacromial Impingement
Syndrome of the Shoulder Joint**

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Silvia Ivanova Filkova, PhD in Health Care

1. General presentation of the procedure

By Order of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna No. R-109-216/22.07.2024, *Denislav Krasimirov Ivanov* was enrolled as a doctoral (PhD) student in an independent form of study in the Doctoral Program in *Health Care Management* at the Department of Health Care, Sliven Branch of the Medical University – Varna, to obtain the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the field of Higher Education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public Health, specialty: Health Care Management.

The dissertation by *Denislav Krasimirov Ivanov*, titled “*Application of Medical Dry Needling in Subacromial Impingement Syndrome of the Shoulder Joint*”, submitted for the awarding of the PhD degree, was discussed and approved for defense by the Departmental Council of the Department of Health Care – Sliven Branch at the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna on 24.02.2026. The scientific supervisor is Assoc. Prof. Silvia Ivanova Filkova, PhD in Health Care.

The submitted documents comply with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna, and include: dissertation, abstract, curriculum vitae, list of publications related to the dissertation topic, copies of publications, declarations, and others.

2. Brief Biographical Data of the Doctoral Candidate

The author, *Denislav Krasimirov Ivanov*, graduated in 2015 from Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland, with a Bachelor's degree in *Sport and Exercise Science (Sports Injuries)*. In 2020, he obtained a Professional Bachelor's degree in *Physiotherapy* at the Medical College of the Medical University – Varna, and later, in 2022, he earned a Master's degree from the Faculty of Health Care of the National Sports Academy “Vasil Levski”, Sofia, specializing in *Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation*.

In 2021, he completed a Specialization in the Dry Needling Method, and in 2023 he completed a postgraduate qualification in Acupuncture and Moxibustion under the Bulgarian Association of Physiotherapists specializing in Acupuncture.

Denislav Ivanov's professional career began in 2014 as a sports therapist with the football club “Links United”, Edinburgh, Scotland. From 2020 to 2023, he worked as a physiotherapist at *Medical Center “Tervel” Ltd.* in Tervel, Dobrich region, and since 2023, he has been a physiotherapist at *Medical Center “Dobrich Physio Center” Ltd.* in Dobrich.

3. General Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation submitted by *Denislav Ivanov* fully meets the academic requirements regarding scope, structure, and formatting. It consists of 218 pages and is organized into four chapters: Chapter One – Review; Chapter Two – Aim, Tasks, Methods; Chapter Three – Results and Discussion; Chapter Four – Conclusions, Contributions, Recommendations, Appendices, and Bibliography. The work includes 48 tables, 20 figures, and 6 appendices. The bibliographic reference list comprises 202 sources, of which 4 are in Cyrillic and 198 in Latin script.

The chapters are chronologically related and meet both structural and content requirements for academic research. A proprietary experimental design was developed, incorporating criterion-based assessment tools, tests, and therapeutic protocols, all presented in the appendices. Two scientific publications related to the dissertation topic have been published.

4. Evaluation of the Topicality of the Topic

The topic chosen by *Denislav Ivanov*, related to the development of effective clinical protocols integrating the method of medical dry needling into modern physiotherapeutic practice, is highly relevant and of significant scientific value. The doctoral candidate, in his work, investigates the possibilities, clinical effectiveness, therapeutic impact, and practical applicability of this physiotherapeutic approach in patients with Subacromial Impingement

Syndrome (SIS) for the management of pain, improvement of functional capacity, and reduction of limited work ability.

5. Awareness of the Problem

The literature review, spanning 37 pages, includes 202 scientific sources, most of which were published in the last ten years. It is organized into seven main sections, which chronologically follow the key tasks of the research problem and address its principal aspects.

In the literature analysis, the author emphasizes the high prevalence of Subacromial Impingement Syndrome, its multifactorial origin, and its tendency to become chronic, which define its medical and social significance. He discusses clinical, functional, and imaging diagnostic methods as well as modern therapeutic approaches in the treatment of SIS.

The fundamental principles, mechanisms, and physiological effects of applying medical dry needling are analyzed in detail. The doctoral candidate's expertise and professional experience contribute to a deep and reasoned analysis, supporting the need to explore the effect of this specialized invasive method, when combined with active kinesiotherapy, on the functional recovery and long-term improvement of patients.

The conclusions of the literature review logically justify the aim and tasks of the dissertation.

6. Research Methodology

The aim of the dissertation is clearly and precisely formulated: To evaluate the effect of applying the therapeutic modality of medical dry needling as an adjunct to a traditional physiotherapeutic protocol in the nonoperative treatment of patients with Subacromial Impingement Syndrome (SIS).

Three working hypotheses have been set, along with seven research tasks, ensuring effective implementation of the planned study.

A prospective, randomized, controlled, parallel-group clinical trial was conducted, including two parallel groups: Experimental group (n=40): traditional physiotherapy program plus medical dry needling; Control group (n=40): traditional physiotherapy program without dry needling.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research (ECR) at the Medical University – Varna.

For achieving the stated objectives, the research employed systematized clinical tests and quantitative measurement methods, categorized by their main characteristics and selected based on their reliability, validity, and clinical applicability.

7. Results and Discussion

The results of the research conducted by *Denislav Ivanov* are presented in the third chapter of the dissertation. The study involved 80 patients diagnosed with Subacromial Impingement Syndrome (SIS) by an orthopedic-traumatologist. Participants were randomly assigned into two parallel groups – an experimental group (n=40) and a control group (n=40). The interventional phase included the application of two different therapeutic protocols: a traditional physiotherapy protocol (control group, CG) and a combined protocol incorporating traditional physiotherapy and medical dry needling (experimental group, EG).

Based on his research, analysis, and professional clinical experience, *Denislav Krasimirov Ivanov* developed an **original therapeutic algorithm integrating clinical evaluation, standardized physiotherapy, targeted application of medical dry needling, and dynamic monitoring of therapeutic outcomes over time in patients with Subacromial Impingement Syndrome.**

The obtained results are analyzed and illustrated through 37 tables and 8 figures, organized into clearly structured thematic sections. I give a very high evaluation of the conducted research, the statistical analysis, and the interpretation of the results.

Based on the research findings and literature analysis, eight conclusions have been formulated, which accurately and concisely summarize the study results. These conclusions are specific, comprehensive, and fully reflect the completion of the research objectives. The recommendations and contributions of the dissertation are significant and derived from the author's own empirical data.

The dissertation is written in clear and precise academic language, demonstrating terminological accuracy and scientific competence.

8. Abstract (Author's Summary)

The abstract is 64 pages long, divided into two sections, and includes the essential components of the conducted research. The results are thoroughly analyzed and clearly presented. The content and quality of the abstract comply with the requirements of the Regulations of the Medical University – Varna, and accurately reflect the main achievements of the study. Two scientific publications related to the dissertation are included.

In **conclusion**, I consider that the dissertation presented by **Denislav Ivanov**, titled *“Application of Medical Dry Needling in Subacromial Impingement Syndrome of the Shoulder Joint,”* demonstrates the doctoral candidate's profound theoretical knowledge and dedication to the subject. It introduces important scientific findings, results, and practically

applicable contributions of significant value to students, practicing physiotherapists, and patients.

The dissertation, by its relevance, quality of obtained results, and scientific significance, meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.

Therefore, I **express my positive evaluation** and recommend that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury confer upon *Denislav Krasimirov Ivanov* the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”, in the field of Higher Education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4 Public Health, and scientific specialty Health Care Management.

14.04.2026.

Issued by:

Assoc. Prof. Pepa Dzhedzheva, PhD (Health Care)

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