STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Silviya Pavlova Nikolova, PhD in Public Health

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Member of the Scientific Jury appointed by Order No. P-109-322/30.09.2026 of the Rector of Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna, in connection with the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Denitsa Ivanova Dimitrova under the doctoral programme "Public Health Management", professional field 7.4 "Public Health", area of higher education 7 "Healthcare and Sports".

Pursuant to Protocol No. 1 of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 13 October 2026, I was appointed to prepare this statement. It is based on the materials submitted for the procedure and the dissertation, taking into account the applicable regulatory requirements. The public defence is scheduled for 24 November 2026, in accordance with the order appointing the jury.

Academic and Professional Background of the Doctoral Candidate

Denitsa Ivanova Dimitrova was born on 7 April 1982 in Dobrich. Her educational background includes a Bachelor's degree in Kinesitherapy from the University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev" in 2004, followed by a Master's degree in the same speciality in 2005. Between 2011 and 2014, she completed a Professional Bachelor's degree in Medical Cosmetology at Medical University of Varna.

Her professional experience includes work as a kinesitherapist in healthcare and cosmetic settings in Varna and Albena, as well as management positions in the service sector. Since September 2014, she has been working as a practical training lecturer at the Medical College – Varna, part of Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov". Her teaching responsibilities include the courses "Practical Training" Parts I, II, III, IV and V, with a total annual workload of approximately 760 hours. She also participates in the development and updating of curricula and teaching materials.

Her professional qualifications have been supplemented by training in the pedagogical foundations of university teaching, introduction to aromatherapy, interactive teaching methods and e-learning, research design and statistical analysis, as well as further development of pedagogical competence.

On 27 January 2023, Denitsa Dimitrova was enrolled as a full-time doctoral candidate in the doctoral programme "Public Health Management" at the Department of Social Medicine and Health Care Organization of Medical University of Varna. Her dissertation focuses on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to antimicrobial resistance in dermatological care.

According to the submitted CV, she is the author or co-author of 19 scientific publications outside the topic of her dissertation. She serves as the administrative and financial officer of research project No. 24033, funded by the Science Fund of Medical University of Varna and

related to the dissertation topic, for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027. She is a member of the Association of Medical Cosmeticians and speaks Russian and English.

Assessment of the Structure and Content of the Dissertation

Denitsa Ivanova Dimitrova has submitted a dissertation entitled "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Related to Antimicrobial Resistance in Dermatological Care", prepared under the scientific supervision of Prof. Klara Georgieva Dokova, MD, PhD. The study addresses a current public health issue and examines antimicrobial resistance in the context of health behaviour, antibiotic use for skin conditions, and infection prevention and control in cosmetic practice.

The dissertation consists of a literature review; sections covering the aim, objectives, hypotheses, material and methods; results and discussion; findings; conclusion; recommendations; contributions; publications; references; and appendices. The presentation follows the logical sequence of a scientific study, from the theoretical and regulatory justification of the problem to the presentation and discussion of empirical findings and the formulation of practically oriented conclusions.

The relevance of the study stems from the need to consider antimicrobial resistance not only as a medical and microbiological problem, but also through the perspectives of health behaviour, awareness and infection prevention. The dissertation appropriately emphasises self-treatment of acne and other skin conditions, as well as the potential for cross-transmission of microorganisms in cosmetic practice.

Particular importance is attached to the Bulgarian context. The author highlights the need for better understanding of antibiotic use among young people and for up-to-date, clearly defined requirements for infection prevention and control in cosmetic salons. The topic therefore has both theoretical and practical value for health education, professional training and the development of preventive measures.

The aim of the study is to examine knowledge, attitudes and practices related to antimicrobial resistance in the context of skin health, with a focus on antibiotic use and self-medication for skin conditions among young people, and infection control in cosmetic practice.

The objectives include examining young people's awareness and behaviour, analysing international recommendations and national regulations, investigating the knowledge, attitudes and practices of professional cosmeticians, and identifying key trends and relationships between these aspects.

The methodological approach includes analysis of international and national documents and recommendations, as well as quantitative surveys among young people aged 18–35 and professional cosmeticians. Structured questionnaires and statistical methods were used to process and analyse the data. Combining regulatory analysis with empirical research allows the issue to be examined in terms of both the regulatory framework and actual health behaviour and professional practices.

One of the important findings is the high prevalence of acne among the young people surveyed: 62.8% reported having experienced acne either in the past or at the time of the study. Among

participants with acne, 27.2% had moderate to very severe forms. These data support the relevance of the topic and the need for targeted health information on appropriate responses to skin conditions.

The study found that self-treatment is widespread. A total of 61.3% of young people reported that they usually manage their skin problems themselves, while a further 20.7% do so less frequently. At the same time, 86.3% believe that acne requires medical consultation and specialist follow-up. Comparing these findings highlights a discrepancy between the stated positive attitude towards medical consultation and actual behaviour.

Another important finding is the identification of risky patterns of antibiotic use, including self-determination of dosage and incomplete or incorrect understanding of treatment duration. The dissertation also reports differences by sex and age, which may inform the planning of future educational activities.

Another key component of the dissertation is the analysis of international guidelines and national regulations on infection prevention and control in cosmetic services. The author makes a case for updating requirements and more clearly integrating standard precautions, hand hygiene, instrument processing and safe professional practices.

The survey of cosmeticians complements the analysis with a professional perspective and draws attention to the need for targeted training and improved infection-control practices. In this way, the dissertation considers antimicrobial resistance a problem requiring coordinated action at individual, professional and regulatory levels.

Main Scientific and Applied Contributions

The scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation can be considered in several complementary areas. First, the study systematises scientific evidence on antimicrobial resistance, antibiotic use for acne and self-treatment of skin conditions, placing these issues in the context of infection control in cosmetic services.

An important aspect is the analysis of international recommendations and regulatory documents related to infection prevention and control in cosmetic practice and their comparison with the applicable framework in Bulgaria. This approach helps identify areas where clearer requirements and consistent implementation of safety measures are needed.

The empirical component examines knowledge, attitudes and patterns of antibiotic self-medication for skin conditions among young people, with a particular focus on acne. The findings help identify gaps in antibiotic literacy and behavioural patterns that should be addressed through targeted health information and educational initiatives.

Another contribution is the investigation of professional cosmeticians' knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning infection control, prevention of cross-infection and antimicrobial resistance. This extends the analysis beyond individual health behaviour and incorporates the professional environment as an important component of prevention.

Overall, the applied value of the study lies in the potential for its findings to inform health education activities, continuing professional development and discussion of measures to improve infection prevention and control practices in cosmetic services.

Publication and Project Activities

The materials submitted with the dissertation list two publications related to the topic: "Antibiotic resistance concerning dermatological practice—research approaches and scope of the problem", published in 2023 in Social Medicine, and "International guidelines for infection prevention and control in cosmetic centers", published in 2026 in Scripta Scientifica Salutis Publicae.

According to the submitted CV, the doctoral candidate is the author or co-author of 19 scientific publications outside the dissertation topic and serves as the administrative and financial officer of research project No. 24033, funded by the Science Fund of Medical University of Varna. Her teaching experience and participation in research projects are relevant to the applied focus of the study.

Critical Remarks and Recommendations

A recommendation for further development of this research topic would be to conduct follow-up studies to track changes in knowledge and practices after targeted educational interventions. Further investigation of the implementation of infection prevention and control measures in professional settings would also allow a more comprehensive assessment of the practical impact of the recommendations made.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the dissertation entitled "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Related to Antimicrobial Resistance in Dermatological Care", I assess Denitsa Ivanova Dimitrova's work positively. The dissertation addresses a current public health issue and is characterised by its combination of an analysis of health behaviour, a study of professional practices and an assessment of the regulatory framework related to infection prevention and control.

I consider the dissertation to have scientific and applied value, and its findings identify opportunities for developing health education initiatives, professional training and improved infection-prevention practices in cosmetic services. In view of the above, I cast a positive vote for awarding Denitsa Ivanova Dimitrova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral programme "Public Health Management", professional field 7.4 "Public Health".

Date: 29/10/2026

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

Prepared by:
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