

**TO
THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY,
APPOINTED BY ORDER No. R-109-245/09.07.2026
OF THE RECTOR OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – VARNA**

REVIEW

by Professor Tsvetelina Valentinova Miteva, MD, PhD

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for the procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral programme "General Medicine", professional field 7. Health Care and Sport, professional field 7.1. Medicine

Author: Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova

Title: Homeopathy in General Medical Practice

Scientific supervisor: Professor Valentina Madzhova, MD, PhD, Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral candidate

The dissertation submitted to me for review is intended for consideration by a scientific jury appointed by Order No. R-109-245/09.07.2026 of the Rector of Medical University – Varna. I have received all the documents required by the procedure.

Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova graduated from Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" in Varna with a Master's degree in Medicine in 1997. She subsequently completed two further master's programmes: in 2009, a Master's in Public Administration, Management of European Public Projects, at Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" – Varna, and in 2004, a Master's programme in Homeopathic Therapy at the National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski", Sofia.

She specialised in "General Medicine" at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" in Varna and in Homeopathic Therapy at MU – Varna and the Centre for Homeopathic Research and Treatment (2001–2003). In 2007, she obtained her specialty qualification in General Medicine within the healthcare system. From 2009 to 2016, she worked as an assistant in Hygiene and Medical Ecology at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Department of Preclinical and Clinical Sciences, MU – Varna, and since 2016 has been an assistant at the Department of General Medicine, Faculty of Medicine. She has also worked as a homeopathic physician in various medical centres from 1999 to the present.

2. General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises 231 pages, including the bibliography and 3 appendices, and is illustrated with 30 tables and 8 figures. It is correctly structured and contains all the customary sections and components.

The aim of the dissertation is to study, analyse and evaluate the attitudes of general practitioners (GPs), medical students, interns and patients regarding the application of homeopathy as a therapeutic and preventive method in general medical practice. In connection with this aim, five objectives were formulated in a logical sequence:

1. To study the interest and attitude of GPs, medical students, interns and patients towards homeopathy as one of the complementary methods of treatment.
2. To study the extent to which homeopathy is applied by GPs.
3. To establish the reasons for the use or rejection of homeopathy by GPs, medical students, interns and patients.
4. To study the level of knowledge and the willingness to receive training in homeopathy among GPs, medical students and interns.
5. To study and evaluate the degree of trust in the doctor–patient relationship with regard to the use of homeopathy.

3. Relevance of the topic

Contemporary understanding of general medicine places the complex needs of individuals and communities at the centre of the healthcare system. Holistic thinking about health is encouraged, taking into account not only the specific medical problem but also its social and psychological consequences for the patient, as well as good communication with the patient. This comprehensive approach to addressing patients' problems increasingly calls for the exploration of different

treatment methods and modes of interaction with the patient. Interest in complementary and alternative methods of treatment has grown in recent decades among both patients and some physicians. Homeopathy is among the most commonly used complementary methods in a number of European countries and worldwide, and is applied predominantly in primary care, where the first contact between the patient and the healthcare system takes place. Homeopathy is often associated with longer and more in-depth consultations, a patient-centred approach, and active patient involvement in the therapeutic process, which contributes to greater patient satisfaction and trust. For this reason, the attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of general practitioners, future medical professionals and patients regarding the use of homeopathy in general medical practice are of considerable importance.

4. Familiarity with the problem

The doctoral candidate demonstrates a thorough understanding of the problem under study. A total of 269 literature sources were analysed, of which only 10 are by Bulgarian authors. An extensive body of national and international literature and regulatory documents concerning homeopathy and its application in medical practice has been reviewed. The analysis of the scientific literature outlines homeopathy as present, yet scientifically debated, in contemporary general medical practice. The literature data indicate that homeopathy is widely used as a complementary method in a number of countries, particularly in the context of primary care, where it is most often applied for functional complaints, mild-to-moderate chronic conditions, and for preventive purposes. A range of attitudes toward its application have been identified, varying from positive interest in its use to scepticism and rejection. The literature review shows that these attitudes are often shaped by the level of awareness, personal experience, cultural context and broader societal attitudes toward complementary methods in general, among both physicians and patients. The literature reviewed is substantial in volume and is presented analytically and thoroughly, demonstrating good command of the subject and strong skills in the competent analysis of the sources used.

5. Research methodology

The principal methods used for data collection were the survey method and the documentary method, both commonly used in similar studies and appropriate to the stated aim. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among three distinct target groups: general practitioners, medical students and interns, and patients. A separate questionnaire was developed for each of the three groups, tailored to the specifics of their role within the healthcare system, while sharing comparable thematic sections that allow for comparative analysis between the groups on specific blocks of

questions. The study included a total of 756 respondents, of whom 54 were general practitioners, 147 were fourth-year medical students and interns, and 555 were patients aged over 18.

The questionnaires were distributed and responses collected between April 2022 and March 2023.

The statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, validity analysis, comparison among the three independent groups (GPs, students, patients), and analysis of associations.

6. Original results

It was found that a relatively large proportion of participants in all three study groups reported having used homeopathy at some point in their lives: 83.3% of GPs, 77.6% of students, and 95.1% of patients. This indicates that homeopathy holds a stable place in the health-related behaviour of patients in Bulgaria. With regard to the perceived health effect following the use of homeopathic remedies, the highest proportion reporting improvement was among patients (83.1%), followed by GPs (72.2%), with the lowest proportion among students (42.2%). Attitudes toward homeopathy differed among the three groups studied: patients were the most positive, GPs held a pragmatic, intermediate position, and students were the most critical. Differences were also found in the primary motivation for using this method of treatment across the three groups: patients were driven by value-based factors – holism and an individualised approach; GPs by pragmatic considerations, chiefly the reduction of antibiotic use and the provision of additional therapeutic options; and students by the principle of safety (seeking fewer side effects of treatment). Training emerged as a key factor in the clinical application of homeopathy by GPs. Physicians with additional qualifications demonstrated higher clinical engagement and greater willingness for open communication with patients on the subject. The level of awareness significantly influenced support for training in homeopathy among both GPs and students.

A significant communication barrier between patients and GPs regarding complementary treatment methods was also identified. Nearly half of patients do not disclose their use of alternative methods to their physician, with the primary reasons being expectations of indifference or a negative reaction, rather than actual negative experience. The majority of patients do not consider their GP as a natural partner in seeking homeopathic treatment, but instead direct their choice toward a specialist with more specific qualifications and greater clinical experience in the method.

The discussion of the results is conducted at a very high academic level, drawing on comparisons with a range of international data, and logical cause-and-effect relationships are drawn. The doctoral candidate demonstrates very good skills in data interpretation and in the analysis and synthesis of the information collected.

The recommendations formulated are practical and are directed toward improving clinical practice in primary care, the medical education of students, continuing education for physicians, and the country's health policy.

7. Contributions of the scientific work, in theoretical and practical terms

In theoretical terms, analytical information has been gathered for the analysis and evaluation of attitudes regarding the application of homeopathy as a therapeutic and preventive method in general medical practice. This is the first comparative study in Bulgaria to encompass general practitioners, patients, and the next generation of physicians entering the healthcare system – interns and medical students. To provide a fuller characterisation of the actual use of homeopathy in Bulgaria, a comparative analysis of the profile of its clinical application across the different study groups has been carried out.

It has been confirmed that the motives for seeking and applying homeopathy differ qualitatively among patients, GPs and medical students. The extent of homeopathy's application by GPs in Bulgaria has been established, and the main factors influencing its clinical application have been identified.

In applied terms, the importance of training in homeopathy has been confirmed for both GPs and students, and practical recommendations have been made regarding its place in medical education and in physicians' continuing education.

8. Assessment of publications and the doctoral candidate's personal contribution

The publications of Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova present the principal results of the research conducted. The doctoral candidate has submitted four full-text publications, published in various databases: the journal "General Medicine", the Journal of IMAB, the journal "Practical Paediatrics", and the journal "Paediatric and Infectious Diseases".

The doctoral candidate has presented at two scientific conferences related to the dissertation.

The autoreferat (dissertation summary) meets the regulatory requirements, is correctly structured, and fully reflects the content, methods, results, conclusions and contributions of the dissertation.

A certain limitation of the study may be noted in that recruitment of participants was conducted on a voluntary basis, using snowball sampling for the patient group and distribution through online channels for the other groups. This approach implies participation predominantly by individuals with prior interest in, or an established position on, the topic, resulting in a degree of selection bias among participants. In the GP group, this led to a smaller overall number of participants, predominantly women, and a relatively high proportion of physicians holding a certificate in homeopathy (55.6%), exceeding what would be expected in the general population.

The limitations noted arise primarily from the chosen research design and the method of participant recruitment. They do not invalidate the results obtained, but call for their more careful interpretation. This in no way diminishes the value of the dissertation or the significance of the reported results, which are very well discussed and analysed.

Conclusion

The dissertation of Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova meets the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADASRB, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University – Varna. It contains scientific and applied results that constitute a contribution to science and to general medical practice, and demonstrates that Dr. Eva Ivanova possesses the requisite theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "General Medicine", as well as the qualities required to conduct independent scientific research in the field.

In view of the above, I consider that the submitted dissertation meets all regulatory requirements, and I support the conferral of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" on Dr. Eva Ivanova.

3.09.2026

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

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