

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Svetlana Hristova Hristova, MD, PhD

Department of General Medicine, Faculty of Medicine,
Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov”-Varna
regarding the dissertation of Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova
on the topic:

“HOMEOPATHY IN GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE”

for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Valentina Madzhova, MD, PhD

1. General overview of the procedure

Pursuant to Order No. R-109-245/09.06.2026 of the Rector of Medical University-Varna, I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury in the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) to Eva Hristova Ivanova, a full-time doctoral student with a dissertation entitled “Homeopathy in General Medical Practice”, in Higher Education Area 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, Doctoral Programme “General Medicine”.

According to the decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I was appointed to present my opinion on the scientific work of Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) in General Medicine.

The set of materials in paper/electronic format, which I received within the required timeframe, fully complies with the requirements of the Procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in accordance with the Regulations of MU-Varna.

The dissertation of Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova was discussed and approved for public defence by the Departmental Council of the Department of General Medicine at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov”-Varna, pursuant to Art. 26, para. 3 and Art. 30, para. 3 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 44, para. 2 of the Regulations for Academic Staff Development of MU-Varna, and a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine.

Following a detailed review of all available documents, I found no violations of the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

2. Short biographical data

Eva Hristova Ivanova was born in 1971 in the town of Devnya. In 1997, she graduated with a Master’s degree in Medicine from MU-Varna. In 2007, she acquired a specialty in General Medicine within the healthcare system. She also holds Master’s degrees in Kinesitherapy and Public Administration. During the period 1997-2016, she attended

numerous qualification courses in the field of homeopathy. Throughout her professional career, Dr. Eva Hristova has passed through all stages of the medical profession. She began working as a feldsher at the municipal hospital in Devnya and subsequently worked as a staff physician at the municipal hospital in Veliki Preslav. From 1999 to the present, she has worked as a homeopathic physician. In 2009, she was appointed as a part-time assistant, and from 2000 as an assistant at the Department of Hygiene and Medical Ecology. Since 2016, she has been an assistant at the Department of General Medicine at MU-Varna.

3. General characteristics and relevance of the dissertation

The dissertation presented by Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova, entitled “Homeopathy in General Medical Practice”, addresses a current, debated and practically significant issue in primary healthcare: the place of homeopathy in general medical practice and attitudes toward its use among general practitioners, future physicians and patients.

The relevance of the topic arises from the actual presence of complementary and alternative methods in the health behaviour of the population and from the need for general practitioners to be familiar not only with the conventional therapy being administered, but also with all complementary methods used by the patient. In this context, informed choice, safety, the quality of communication and trust in the physician–patient relationship are of particular importance.

The dissertation distinguishes between the question of the specific therapeutic efficacy of homeopathic medicines and their actual use by patients. The author focuses on attitudes, health behaviour, clinical communication and the ability of general medical practice to manage the use of alternative therapeutic methods competently and safely. This approach determines both the scientific and the practical value of the work.

4. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation

The dissertation of Dr. Eva Hristova comprises 231 pages and is illustrated with 30 tables and 8 figures and includes 3 appendices. The reference list contains 269 sources. It is structured consistently and in accordance with the requirements for preparing a dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD). The literature review is extensive and examines the nature and historical development of homeopathy, its place among traditional and alternative methods, the existing scientific assessment of the method, regulatory aspects, international prevalence, possibilities for integration into general medical practice, the approach of medical education to the topic, and the influence of additional qualifications on the attitudes of general practitioners.

The different positions in the scientific literature are presented, and the existing dissonance between the persistent public use of homeopathy and the lack of convincing evidence for specific clinical efficacy according to a number of regulatory assessments and systematic analyses is acknowledged. In this way, the literature review provides the necessary theoretical basis for the research question posed.

5. Relevance of the topic, methodology, and appropriateness of the aims and objectives

The aim of the dissertation is clearly formulated: to investigate, analyse and assess the attitudes of general practitioners, medical students, medical interns and patients toward the use of homeopathy as a therapeutic and preventive method in general medical practice. To

achieve this aim, five specific objectives were set, directed at studying interest in and attitudes toward homeopathy, the extent of its use by general practitioners, the reasons for its use or non-use, knowledge and willingness to undergo training, and the degree of trust in the physician–patient relationship with regard to the use of complementary and alternative methods. Corresponding working hypotheses were formulated for the stated objectives.

A survey study was conducted among three main target groups: general practitioners, medical students and medical interns, as well as patients. Three originally developed questionnaires were used, adapted to the specifics of each group but also containing an identical block of 13 statements assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. This enables a comparative assessment of attitudes among the different groups.

An appropriate set of descriptive and analytical methods was used for the statistical analysis. The Kruskal-Wallis test, Conover–Iman post-hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction, Spearman correlation analysis, Pearson's χ^2 test, Fisher's exact test and Cramer's V were applied. The reliability and validity of the instrument used were assessed by Cronbach's alpha and correlation analyses. The selected methodology corresponds to the stated aim.

6. Results and discussion

The results are presented systematically and are followed by a detailed discussion in the context of data from the international literature.

One of the important findings is the statistically significant pattern of differences in overall attitudes toward homeopathy among the studied groups. Patients demonstrate the most positive attitudes, general practitioners occupy an intermediate and more pragmatic position, while medical students are the most critical.

Of particular interest and practical significance is the observed convergence among the three groups with regard to communication. Despite differences in perceptions of the efficacy of homeopathy, the participants share an appreciation of the importance of open dialogue, informed choice and the need for physicians to be able to discuss competently with patients the use of complementary and alternative methods.

An important result is the identification of a communication barrier between patients and general practitioners. A substantial proportion of patients do not inform their physician about the use of alternative methods, mainly because they expect a lack of interest or a negative attitude on the part of the medical professional.

The analysis of factors associated with the use of homeopathy by general practitioners is also of interest. Additional training emerges as a leading factor for its clinical application, with physicians qualified in the field demonstrating greater engagement and a greater willingness to communicate with patients on the topic.

The discussion is one of the strengths of the dissertation. The author does not limit herself to a mechanical presentation of the results, but compares them with published international data and seeks to interpret their significance for general medical practice.

7. Conclusions and practical recommendations

The formulated conclusions follow logically from the conducted study and correspond to the stated objectives.

A particularly significant conclusion is that the actual use of homeopathy and other complementary methods by patients occurs in parallel with conventional treatment, but is not always addressed in clinical communication with the general practitioner.

From a practical perspective, the proposal to routinely include questions about the use of complementary and alternative methods in the medical history, using a non-judgemental and patient-centred communication approach, deserves support.

Also important is the recommendation that medical education should provide basic awareness of CAM, with emphasis on critical appraisal of the evidence base, safety and competent communication with patients who use such methods.

8. Scientific and applied scientific contributions

The data from Dr. Eva Hristova's study are important for medical practice. She has identified 16 contributions in three aspects: original, scientific-practical and confirmatory. Among the original contributions, it should be noted that this is the first large-scale comparative study in Bulgaria to analyse and assess attitudes toward the use of homeopathy while simultaneously including general practitioners, patients and future physicians, allowing their attitudes to be analysed within a common methodological framework. Of particular interest is the study of students both as future medical professionals and as current users of homeopathy, as well as the analysis of changes in attitudes in the context of medical education.

Of scientific and applied importance is the established need to improve communication concerning complementary and alternative methods in general medical practice, as well as the advocacy of training in homeopathy as an additional qualification for general practitioners, which may lead to greater clinical engagement and greater willingness to apply it in general practice.

9. Assessment of publications related to the dissertation

In connection with the dissertation, four scientific publications and two participations in scientific forums have been presented. The publications address various aspects of homeopathy, including the knowledge and attitudes of the Bulgarian population, the reasons for seeking homeopathic treatment and the application of complementary and alternative methods for certain health problems. The presented publication activity demonstrates the doctoral student's consistent work on the dissertation topic and the dissemination of some of the obtained results within the scientific community.

10. Dissertation abstract

The copy of the dissertation abstract provided to me is adequate in scope, content and quality and reflects the main results of the dissertation. It fully complies with the requirements set out in the Regulations of MU-Varna.

11. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks or recommendations regarding the conducted study, its conclusions and contributions, or the materials provided to me in connection with the procedure.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation of Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova entitled “Homeopathy in General Medical Practice” represents an independent and completed scientific study on a current and practically significant issue in general medicine. The dissertation meets all requirements under the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the relevant Regulations of MU-Varna. The submitted materials and dissertation results fully comply with the requirements of MU-Varna. The stated aim is clearly formulated, the objectives have been consistently fulfilled, the applied methodology is appropriate, and the obtained results have been analysed and discussed in the context of existing scientific data. The formulated conclusions arise from the conducted study, while the presented contributions have scientific, confirmatory and applied scientific value.

I particularly appreciate the focus of the dissertation on the practically significant issue of physician–patient communication. Regardless of the scientific discussions concerning the efficacy of homeopathy, the actual use of complementary methods by patients is a fact that requires general practitioners to possess adequate knowledge, critical appraisal skills, clinical vigilance and the ability to communicate openly.

I consider that the presented dissertation meets the requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD).

On this basis, I give my positive assessment and propose that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury vote in favour of awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) to Dr. Eva Hristova Ivanova.

27.08.2025

Varna

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