

To
The Academic Jury appointed by
Order No. P-109-126 of March 11, 2026
of the Rector of Medical University - Varna

In response to your Minutes No. 1 of March 16, 2026

I hereby submit the following:

REVIEW

on a dissertation for the award of
the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor”
by Assoc. Prof. Dr Julian Rangachev, MD, PhD

Field of Higher Education: 7. Health Care and Sports

Professional Field: 7.1. Medicine

Scientific Specialty: 03.01.35 Otorhinolaryngology

Author: Dr. Kameliya Milcheva Korucheva

Dissertation Title: “Impact of COVID-19 on Otorhinolaryngology”

Form of PhD Training: Full-time

Department: “Neurosurgery and ENT Diseases”, Faculty of ENT Diseases
Medical University – Varna

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Nikolay Sapundzhiev, MD, PhD

I. Brief Information on the Candidate’s Career Development

Dr. Kameliya Milcheva Korucheva graduated in Medicine from the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna in 1995. She obtained her specialty in Otorhinolaryngology in 2009. Her professional career began at the Center for Emergency Medical Care, and subsequently continued at the University Hospital “St. Marina” – Varna, where she developed her clinical and research activities—initially as a part-time assistant and, since 2020, as a full-time assistant at the Department of Neurosurgery and ENT Diseases.

She has accumulated extensive experience in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with ENT diseases.

Since 2023, she has been a full-time PhD student at the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna. Dr. Milcheva has participated in scientific forums and has publications, including those indexed in PubMed. She is proficient in English and Russian.

II. General Presentation of the Procedure

The submitted materials, both in printed and electronic form, comply with the requirements of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Medical University – Varna and the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Scientific Research at the Medical University – Varna on 23.06.2022. Regular attestations have been conducted, all with positive evaluations. The stages of the research plan have been completed within the scheduled timeframes. The required scientometric indicators have been met.

The PhD candidate has been granted the right to defend the dissertation by Order No. R-109-126/11.03.2026 of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna.

The dissertation, abstract, and all accompanying documents fully comply with the legal requirements.

III. Relevance of the Research Topic

The dissertation is devoted to a highly actual and socially significant topic concerning the impact of SARS-CoV-2 infection on clinical practice, diagnostics, and treatment in otorhinolaryngology.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges to healthcare systems and required a re-evaluation of clinical algorithms in ENT practice.

The topic is particularly relevant due to the anatomical and functional relationship of ENT organs with the main entry routes of the virus, as well as the high occupational risk for medical personnel in this specialty.

IV. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation addresses a highly relevant issue—the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on clinical practice and organizational processes in otorhinolaryngology.

The work is logically structured and includes:

- Introduction and literature review
- Aim and objectives
- Materials and methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusions and contributions

The dissertation comprises 204 pages and includes 84 tables, 65 figures, and 1 appendix. The literature review demonstrates thorough knowledge of the current state of the field and is based on up-to-date international sources.

The study is based on an in-depth analysis of hospital activity in an ENT clinic for the period 2018–2021, including evaluation of hospitalizations, their structure, seasonal dynamics, and distribution by nosological groups. Particularly valuable is the focus on tracheostomies as a key intervention during the pandemic.

The inclusion of a national survey among ENT specialists significantly expands the scope of the research and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the professional and organizational aspects of the problem.

The methodological approach is appropriate and includes modern statistical methods enabling objective evaluation of observed changes. The results are clearly presented, logically interpreted, and compared with international data.

Of particular interest is the presentation of clinical cases of rhino-orbito-cerebral mucormycosis in the context of COVID-19, highlighting the clinical significance of the study.

The dissertation provides significant scientific and practical contributions by identifying major changes in the structure, dynamics, and organization of ENT practice during the pandemic through comprehensive analysis and national survey data.

The abstract is prepared in accordance with institutional requirements and accurately reflects the main results, conclusions, and contributions. It consists of 76 pages, including 20 tables and 24 figures.

V. Methodology and Reliability of Results

The applied methods are modern, appropriate, and aligned with the study objectives. The analysis of clinical material has been conducted correctly using relevant statistical methods.

The results are clearly presented and allow for well-founded conclusions.

VI. Scientific and Applied Contributions

The dissertation contains original scientific and applied contributions, summarized as follows:

- Expansion of knowledge regarding the clinical manifestations of COVID-19 in ENT practice
- Analysis of diagnostic and therapeutic challenges in patients with concomitant ENT diseases
- Optimization of clinical management and organization of work during a pandemic
- Practical recommendations for improving the safety of medical personnel

VII. Publications Related to the Dissertation

Part of the dissertation results has been presented in scientific publications and at scientific forums, confirming their scientific relevance and validation.

The publications related to the dissertation are three in number—two in English and one in Bulgarian—with the PhD candidate as first author, all within the last five years:

1. Milcheva K, Sapundzhiev NR, Georgiev R, Stoyanov GS, Niyazi D. *Post-COVID-19 Related Rhinocerebral Mucormycosis in Bulgaria: A Report of Three Cases*. CUREUS, October 26, 2024. DOI: 10.7759/cureus.72434
2. Milcheva K, Sapundzhiev NR. *Impact of COVID-19 on Otorhinolaryngologists in Bulgaria: A Survey of Healthcare Professionals*. CUREUS, February 18, 2025. DOI: 10.7759/cureus.79229
3. Milcheva K, Sapundzhiev NR. “*The Most Commonly Performed Procedure in Otorhinolaryngology – from A to Z*”, MEDINFO, Issue 10, 2022, pp. 76–79

VIII. Conclusion

The presented dissertation by Dr. Kameliya Milcheva Korucheva represents a completed scientific study with a relevant topic, clearly defined objectives, appropriately selected methodology, and significant scientific contributions.

The dissertation and abstract meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its implementing regulations, and the regulations of the Medical University – Varna.

The submitted work fulfills the requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

Based on the above, I give my positive evaluation and strongly recommend that the Scientific Jury award Dr. Kameliya Milcheva Korucheva the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific specialty “Otorhinolaryngology”.

Sofia, 21.04.2026

Signature: ..

Assoc. Prof. Yulian Rangachev, MD, PhD

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