

## STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Atanasova Varneva, PhD, DSc  
Dental Technician Training Sector, Medical College  
Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Medical University of Varna  
Member of the Scientific Jury pursuant to Order No. R-109-62/27.01.2026  
of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna

**Re:** Dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the specialty "Health Care Management" in the field of higher education 7. "Health Care and Sports," professional direction 7.4. "Public Health," on the topic "Knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the control of cross-infections in dental laboratories," authored by lecturer Nela Georgieva Kalpakchieva from the Dental Technician Training Sector at the Medical College of the Medical University of Varna.

### **Procedure for announcing the public defense**

The dissertation was discussed and referred for public defense by the Department of Health Care at the Medical University of Varna on January 15, 2026.

By Order No. P-109-62/January 27, 2026, of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna, I have been included as an internal member of the Scientific Jury for the public defense of the dissertation.

According to Protocol No. 1/04.02.2026 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I have been appointed to prepare an opinion on the procedure.

The candidate has submitted all necessary documents in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Medical University of Varna.

### **Brief Biographical Data and Professional Development of the Doctoral Candidate**

Lecturer Nela Kalpakchieva was born on April 15, 1976, in Razgrad. In 2012, she graduated from Medical College (MC) - Varna and obtained a Professional Bachelor's degree in dental technology. In 2018, she completed her studies at the Medical University of Varna and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Health Care Management. In 2019, she graduated from Medical University-Varna and obtained a Master's degree in Health Care Management. In 2023, after a competitive selection process, she was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in Health Care Management at the Department of Health Care, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna.

Nela Kalpakchieva began her professional career in 2012 as a dental technician at Independent Medical-Technical Laboratory "D. Kalpakchiev" EOOD in Varna, where she worked until 2018. From 2013 to 2018, she was invited to serve as an adjunct lecturer at MC-Varna, where she taught anatomy and morphology of the teeth, with drawing, sculpting, and modeling; dental materials science, with equipment and instruments; and practical training. Since 2018, she has been working under a permanent employment contract as a university lecturer at the Dental Technician Department of the Medical College in Varna.

The continuing education courses she has taken contribute to Kalpakchieva's professional development and interdisciplinary training, shaping her as a well-prepared, modern-thinking professional, teacher, and researcher. The main focus of her postgraduate training and qualification is

in the field of dental technology and training in the specialty.

Kalpakchieva is a researcher in Project No. 23007 "Knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to cross-infection control in dental laboratories" under the Science Fund, approved for funding by a decision of the Medical University of Varna's Academic Council on December 11, 2023.

She has good foreign language skills and is fluent in English and Russian.

### **Scientometric Analysis of the Dissertation**

The academic reference prepared by the MU – Varna Library in connection with the defense demonstrates Nela Kalpakchieva's scientific productivity.

The following documents are attached for participation in the current procedure: Dissertation for the acquisition of an educational and scientific degree (ESD) "Doctor"; Abstract of the dissertation; Full-text scientific publications—a total of 2 published in peer-reviewed journals.

The publications are accurately described and thoroughly included with the competition materials. The candidate has demonstrated a significant personal contribution to scientific research and publications as the first author.

The scientometric analysis indicates that all indicators meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Medical University — Varna for earning the academic degree of "Doctor" (PhD).

### **Relevance and significance of the dissertation**

This scientific work presents the first large-scale, targeted, and in-depth study in Bulgaria on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to cross-infection control in dental laboratories. For the first time in Bulgaria, the opinions of practicing dental technicians, dental laboratory managers, and dentists on the subject are examined. The qualitative and quantitative studies that examine in depth the knowledge and practices of professionals involved in providing dental care to patients are of significant value.

Nela Kalpakchieva's dissertation is in the field of Public Health Management. The topic is interesting and practical. The scientific work thoroughly examines, presents, and analyzes the results regarding the issue under consideration. Emphasis is placed on the need for training on this topic. The topic is highly relevant for our country, as Bulgaria, unlike a number of European countries, does not have clearly defined rules and a good regulatory framework. The scientific information provided and summarized (a study of global and European experience and the results of our own research) presents and compares the regulatory framework governing the prevention of cross-infections in dental practices around the world. The study was conducted in the context of public and individual needs to improve healthcare for the population.

### **Structure and content of the dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into three chapters and contains 161 pages. It is illustrated with 39 tables, 34 figures, and 3 appendices. The bibliography includes 176 sources in Latin and Cyrillic. Its structure is logically constructed and balanced.

The first chapter demonstrates broad awareness and the ability to critically evaluate, summarize, systematize, thoroughly analyze, and interpret the available scientific literature. The history and current

status of the issue of knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the control of cross-infections in dental laboratories in Bulgaria, worldwide, and in Europe are presented through: analysis of documents and regulations; review of scientific research, facts, and specific examples; examination of European and American experience.

Chapter Two outlines the specific aim, objectives, methodology, and organization of the study. The purpose of the scientific work is clearly and precisely defined. The opinions of practicing dental technicians and dentists are analyzed. Five main tasks are established to achieve the stated goal. They are logically consistent and comprehensively address the problem. The six hypotheses formulated align with the set tasks. They are logically consistent and cover the problem completely. The research protocol is presented in a clear and detailed manner. The materials and methods used are described thoroughly.

Our own quantitative and qualitative studies and analyses are presented in the third chapter. The results are shown comprehensively, illustrated, and analyzed. Based on the data collected from the studies, a training model for infection control in dental laboratories has been developed and introduced for the first time in Bulgaria.

Conclusions have been formulated based on an in-depth study of the available literature, documents, and the results of our own studies.

### **Conclusions, recommendations, and contributions of the dissertation**

The conclusions are clearly stated and logically follow from the results obtained. Of practical significance are the conclusions that confirm the need for additional training on compliance with disinfection rules through initial and periodic instruction led by dental laboratory managers. The implementation of infection control training in the dental laboratory will reduce the risk of cross-infections, foster a culture of safety, improve communication with the dental office, and help decrease sick days.

The recommendations will support updating the regulatory framework, enhancing teamwork, and safeguarding the health of dental team members and patients.

I accept the eight original contributions noted in the dissertation—six theoretical and cognitive, and two practical and applied.

As a summary characteristic of the scientific work and related publications, I emphasize the relevance of the topic, the precise methodology, the contributory nature, and the potential for practical application of the scientific results.

In connection with the dissertation, two full-text publications are presented, in which Kalpakchieva is the first author.

### **Abstract**

The abstract is prepared in a summarized form. It fully reflects the content of the dissertation. It is 67 pages long and is well illustrated with highly informative figures and tables.

A list of publications related to the topic of the dissertation is also included.

### **Personal impressions of the dissertation author**

I have known Nela Kalpakchieva since she was a student studying Dental Technology. Responsible and eager to succeed, she consistently and successfully acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies. Evidence of this is that Kalpakchieva graduated with honors from the 2012

class at the Medical College in Varna. Her work on the topic of "Knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to cross-infection control in dental laboratories" is a cause close to her heart. As a professional, she researches and organizes the data collected on this topic. The goals have been achieved thanks to her persistence, consistency, systematic approach, and scientific interest in the issues of cross-infections in dental practice.

### **Recommendations**

I would like to recommend that N. Kalpakchieva intensify her publishing activity so that the scientific community can become familiar with her scientific work. This will contribute to enriching the relatively weak theoretical approaches and research on the subject.

### **Conclusion**

The dissertation thesis of lecturer Nela Kalpakchieva, entitled "Knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to cross-infection control in dental laboratories," addresses a topical and significant issue. It is very well structured, with clearly defined objectives and tasks. The methodology is comprehensive, appropriately selected, and competently applied. The results are presented accurately and comprehensively. The conclusions are clearly formulated and form the basis for the dissertation's contributions. The subject matter of the scientific work requires diverse scientific interests, and the research work demonstrates skills in developing and applying complex quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The dissertation and the publications presented fully meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Medical University of Varna for the acquisition of the academic degree of "Doctor."

The in-depth nature of the research, the subject matter, the results obtained, and the contributions, which are original in both theoretical and practical terms, give me reason to give my positive assessment of the dissertation and to confidently recommend to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury that Nela Georgieva Kalpakchieva be awarded the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the specialty of "Health Care Management."

March 20, 2026

Varna

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

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