

STATEMENT

by **Assoc. Prof. Silviya Pavlova Nikolova, PhD**
Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization
Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna

Member of the **Scientific Jury** appointed by Order No. R-109-505/10.12.2025 of Prof. Dr. Dimitar Raykov, DSc – Rector of Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna, in accordance with the decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Public Health (Protocol No. 253/03.12.2025) and based on report No. 102-3135/02.12.2025 submitted by Assoc. Prof. Natalia Usheva, MD, PhD – Head of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization.

Subject: Procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor (PhD)” in the field of higher education 7. Health and Sports, professional field 7.4. Public Health, specialty Public Health Management.

Author of the dissertation: Pavel Mutter

Title of the dissertation:

“Effectiveness of Influenza Vaccines in Preventing Morbidity Among Adults Aged Over 80 Years”

According to Protocol No. 1 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury held on 16.12.2025, I was appointed to prepare this statement. It has been prepared on the basis of an analysis of the documents submitted by the candidate (as described in the application to the Rector of Medical University – Varna) 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 Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.

The submitted documentation also includes a declaration confirming the registration of profiles in scientific databases (ORCID and Google Scholar), which corresponds to good academic practices related to transparency and traceability of scientific activity.

Academic and Professional Biography of the Candidate

Pavel Mutter is a specialist with extensive professional experience in clinical nursing care and in working with patients with chronic diseases. His education and professional development are closely related to clinical practice and to the management of medical care for patients with complex health conditions.

The candidate graduated from Hadassah – Hebrew University School of Nursing, where in 2001 he obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Nursing. In 2008 he completed a Master’s degree in Advanced Clinical Nursing, which enabled him to develop competencies in clinical practice, diagnostic reasoning and the management of healthcare for patients with complex medical needs. Subsequently, in 2018, he obtained the qualification Geriatric Nurse Practitioner, aimed at further developing professional competencies in working with elderly patients.

The professional activity of the candidate is related to clinical work within the healthcare system, where he participates in the diagnostic and therapeutic process, patient monitoring and

the management of medical care for individuals with chronic diseases. His experience working with elderly patients, including individuals with complex health conditions, provides a solid practical basis for the development of the dissertation research. In terms of scientific activity, the candidate has publications related to infectious diseases and healthcare for elderly patients. Some of the results of his scientific work have been published in international scientific journals and address issues related to the organization of healthcare and the prevention of infectious diseases.

Assessment of the Structure and Content of the Dissertation and the Abstract

The dissertation of Pavel Mutter entitled “*Effectiveness of Influenza Vaccines in Preventing Morbidity Among Adults Aged Over 80 Years*” addresses a topic of clear relevance both from a scientific and practical perspective. In the context of population ageing and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, the prevention of infectious diseases among elderly individuals is becoming an increasingly important element of public health policy. Influenza remains one of the most common seasonal infectious diseases and in elderly populations it often leads to more severe clinical outcomes, including complications, hospitalizations and adverse health outcomes.

The dissertation has a total volume of 111 pages, illustrated with 12 figures and 3 tables, and includes 154 literature sources, which demonstrates good familiarity with the contemporary scientific literature on the topic. The structure of the dissertation follows the classical format of a scientific study, including an introduction, literature review, research aim and objectives, methodology, presentation of results, discussion and conclusions.

The literature review examines key issues related to population ageing and the epidemiological characteristics of influenza among elderly populations. Particular attention is given to the role of vaccination as a major preventive measure, as well as to factors that may influence immune response among elderly patients, including comorbidities, functional status and cognitive impairment.

The aim of the study is clearly formulated and focuses on assessing the effectiveness of influenza vaccination among patients aged over 80 years with dementia by analyzing the relationship between vaccination status and several clinical indicators such as pneumonia incidence, hospitalization rates and antibiotic use.

The methodological approach is appropriate for the research objectives and allows an analysis of health outcomes among a particularly vulnerable patient population. The results are presented clearly and systematically, and the author attempts to interpret the observed trends in the context of existing scientific evidence.

The submitted abstract corresponds to the structure and content of the dissertation and provides a clear overview of the research rationale, methodology, results and scientific contributions.

Main Scientific and Applied Contributions

The scientific results presented in the dissertation have both research and applied significance for the development of knowledge in the field of public health and the prevention of infectious diseases among elderly populations. First, the study focuses on a specific and relatively under-researched population group – adults aged over 80 years, including individuals with dementia and multiple comorbidities. Investigating the effectiveness of influenza vaccination in this population is particularly important due to their increased vulnerability to infectious diseases and related complications. An important contribution of the dissertation is the analysis of the relationship between vaccination status and the incidence of respiratory infections, including pneumonia, among elderly patients. The study also evaluates the impact of influenza vaccination on hospitalization rates and antibiotic use, providing additional insight into the potential benefits of vaccination in this population. Another relevant contribution is the examination of the role of comorbidities and cognitive impairment in interpreting the observed health outcomes, which allows a more realistic assessment of vaccination effectiveness among elderly patients with complex health conditions.

From a practical perspective, the results of the study may contribute to the development and improvement of preventive programs and vaccination strategies targeting elderly populations.

Critical Remarks and Recommendations

Alongside the positive evaluation of the dissertation, several remarks may be made that are mainly of a recommendatory nature and may contribute to the further development of the research.

The studied topic is complex and influenced by multiple clinical and organizational factors related to the health status of patients and the organization of healthcare services. Future studies could expand the analysis by including additional variables such as functional status, social environment and organizational aspects of healthcare delivery. Furthermore, a broader comparison with results from other international studies focusing on influenza vaccination among elderly populations could further strengthen the interpretation of the results and allow clearer positioning of the findings within the international scientific context.

These remarks do not diminish the value of the conducted research, which addresses an important public health issue and provides results with practical relevance

Conclusion

After reviewing the content of the dissertation, the scientific publications related to the topic of the research, as well as the originality and significance of the presented scientific and applied results, and considering that the candidate meets the minimum scientometric requirements established in the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, I give a **POSITIVE ASSESSMENT** regarding the awarding of the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor (PhD)**” to **Pavel Mutter**.

The dissertation addresses a relevant issue in the field of public health related to the prevention of influenza infections among elderly patients. The study contributes to a better understanding of the effectiveness of influenza vaccination among individuals aged over 80 years

and provides a basis for further research and the development of preventive strategies for this vulnerable population.

Although certain aspects of the research could be further developed in future studies, the dissertation demonstrates an effort to analyze real clinical data and provides a foundation for further scientific investigation in this field. In this sense, the dissertation has practical significance and potential for further scientific development, and its results may serve as a basis for future research and for improving preventive approaches in healthcare for elderly patients.

10 March 2026

Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury:

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

Assoc. Prof. Silviya Nikolova, PhD