

**TO THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY,
APPOINTED BY ORDER No. R-109-151/26.03.2026
OF THE RECTOR OF THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF VARNA**

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Polina Marinova-Kichikova, MD, PhD
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Regarding the public defense of the dissertation thesis of Dr. Vladislav Krasimirov Velikov for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, Doctoral Programme in Surgery

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Vasil Markov Bozhkov, MD, DSc
Medical University of Varna

1. Professional Development of the Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Vladislav Velikov was born on 21 December 1995 in the town of Silistra, Bulgaria. In 2020, he graduated from the Medical University of Varna with a degree in Medicine. During the period 2021–2026, he has worked as a physician-assistant at the Department of Surgical Diseases, Medical University of Varna.

2. Relevance and Significance of the Dissertation Thesis

Contemporary splenic surgery is of substantial importance because it enables effective treatment of traumatic injuries and splenic diseases while simultaneously preserving organ function whenever possible. The spleen plays a critical role in the immune system and blood filtration; therefore, modern surgical practice increasingly favors minimally invasive and organ-preserving procedures. Owing to the development of laparoscopic techniques, surgical interventions have become safer, less painful, and associated with faster postoperative recovery.

Modern splenic surgery has demonstrated effectiveness in the management of hemorrhage, tumors, hematological disorders, and splenomegaly, while reducing postoperative

complications and improving patients' quality of life. The doctoral candidate has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the significance of this problem in surgical practice and has chronologically outlined the evolution of concepts, indications, and technical aspects of splenic interventions. It is appropriately emphasized that during the 1960s a substantial change occurred in the indications for splenectomy, particularly in traumatic injuries and benign disorders. By the late 1980s, conservative management and spleen-preserving strategies became increasingly established, supported by evidence regarding the spleen's important immunological role. At the end of the twentieth century, laparoscopic splenectomy emerged as the preferred surgical approach due to its minimally invasive nature and accelerated postoperative recovery.

3. Structure of the Dissertation Thesis

The dissertation comprises a total of 139 standard pages and is illustrated with 81 tables, 18 figures, and 40 charts. The bibliography contains 288 references, including 4 in Cyrillic and 284 in Latin script, presented over 15 pages.

The thesis is logically and harmoniously structured and contains all mandatory components: Introduction – 1 page; Literature Review – 30 pages; Aim and Objectives; Materials and Methods and Study Design – 16 pages; Results of the Author's Own Research – 51 pages; Discussion – 17 pages; Conclusions – 1 page; Contributions – 1 page; and Bibliography – 15 pages.

The literature review is comprehensive and informative, providing rapid orientation to the research topic and clearly outlining the future objectives of the dissertation. It is based on contemporary scientific sources and reflects the international experience of numerous surgical schools. However, the information concerning the Bulgarian context remains relatively limited.

The aim of the dissertation is clearly formulated and demonstrates an ambition for an in-depth exploration of the problem: to investigate, analyze, and implement contemporary diagnostic and therapeutic strategies and treatment methods in patients with splenic diseases, with the objective of optimizing clinical outcomes and reducing complications and mortality in this group of patients.

The dissertation contains six objectives, logically derived from the stated aim.

The materials and methods are thoroughly and comprehensively described.

The study is retrospective in nature, covering the period 2008–2023, and includes 117 patients (61 men and 56 women) with splenic diseases who were hospitalized and surgically treated at the Second Department of Surgery, St. Marina University Hospital, Varna.

The results adequately reflect the complexity of the investigations performed. The mean age of the patients was 57 years, ranging from 16 to 83 years, demonstrating the heterogeneity of the studied population and confirming that splenic diseases may occur across all age groups.

Detailed statistical analyses were performed regarding the relationships between parameters associated with hemoperitoneum, age, comorbidity, and their influence on mortality and five-year survival following splenectomy.

The diagnostic distribution in the present study demonstrates that the largest proportion of patients suffered from malignant hematological diseases – 53 cases (45.3%), followed by benign hematological diseases – 14 cases (12.0%). Traumatic splenic injuries were identified in 11 patients (9.4%), with the same percentage observed in patients with splenic abscesses and in those with tumors involving adjacent structures and organs.

Nearly half of all patients – 56 out of 117 (47.9%) – required intensive monitoring during the early postoperative period.

Based on the findings of the present study, the doctoral candidate has proposed a standardized management algorithm applicable to patients with splenic diseases, which is expected to optimize treatment outcomes upon implementation in clinical practice.

The dissertation presents five conclusions, which logically reflect the analysis of the obtained results. The thesis also includes five contributions distinguished by their practical and applied character.

With regard to the bibliography, it would be appropriate for the references in Cyrillic script to be listed at the beginning of the reference section.

The abstract is well structured and adequately conveys the principal aspects of the dissertation.

Dr. Velikov has presented three publications related to the dissertation thesis, two of which were published in proceedings from scientific forums held in Bulgaria, and one in a non-indexed Bulgarian journal.

Conclusion

Following a detailed analysis of the dissertation with regard to its structure and content, I consider it to be a fully completed scientific work possessing significant scientific, practical, and applied merits. I am convinced that it satisfies the criteria of the

Regulations for the Academic Staff Development of the Medical University of Varna for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Medicine". Therefore, I give my positive evaluation and support the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Medicine" to Dr. Vladislav Velikov, doctoral candidate at the Department of Surgical Diseases, Medical University of Varna.

12.05.2026

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Respectfully,

Assoc. Prof. Polina Marinova-Kichikova, MD, PhD

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