

STATEMENT OF OPINION

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Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", Faculty "International Economics and Administration", member of Scientific Jury in accordance with Order № P-109-194/28.04.2022r. of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna

for dissertation on the topic: SYSTEM OF INDICATORS FOR MEASURING AND EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE IN BULGARIA

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for the award of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
Professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, Doctoral programme Organization and management outside the sphere of material production (in healthcare)

I. General evaluation of the dissertation

The dissertation is developed in a volume of 182 pages and includes an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, appendices and a bibliography. The dissertation contains 26 tables, 32 figures. 175 sources were used, of which 53 in Bulgarian and 122 in English.

Relevance of the dissertation. The dissertation deals with a relevant and important topic related to the quality of functioning of the health system in Bulgaria. The need for new studies is argued due to the lack of established practice for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the quality of medical care. The existing problems in the functioning of the health system create high dissatisfaction, both for those who provide medical services and those who need them. The creation of a system of indicators for measuring and assessing the quality of health care in Bulgaria helps for its more purposeful management, provides transparency for the activities of the health system and assists in making adequate political decisions for its functioning. In this regard, I believe that V. Nikolova convincingly presents the relevance of the chosen topic in the introduction.

The structure of the dissertation is logically consistent. The introduction formulates exactly the purpose and tasks, clearly outlining the author's research activities, within the presented limitations.

Three theses are formulated that are a good basis for conducting the dissertation research. The doctoral student uses appropriate research methods that ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the results.

The first chapter of the dissertation begins with a thorough review of the quality nature, and V. Nikolova systematizes the variety of definitions and highlights the differences in the perceptions of producers and consumers about quality. The author demonstrates in-depth knowledge and analytical skills in clarifying the complexity of defining the quality of health care due to its carriers - health services, the process of providing medical care or health care in general. The difference between the content of quality of and in healthcare is shown. Different approaches and methods for measuring the quality of health services are presented and the concept of Donabedian is accepted for measuring quality through a set of indicators taking into account the existing structure, ongoing processes and the end result, which later became the basis for the conceptual model - contribution

of doctoral student. The concepts of measuring and evaluating quality are compared, and the approaches used to study the quality of health services are considered. The advantages and disadvantages of the outcome measures are presented in tabular form. The internationally applied approaches and tools for measuring and evaluating the quality of health care are described in detail. The conceptual frameworks for assessing the functioning of the health system in fifteen countries around the world have been studied and the main elements and indicators have been systematized.

I highly appreciate the personal position of the doctoral student in the theoretical review and the presentation of significant problems in the quality of health services.

In the second chapter, the exposition is again arranged in three paragraphs. The doctoral student studies and systematizes: the existing legislation used to ensure the quality of the medical sector in Bulgaria; the existing practices for measuring and assessing the quality of health care in the country and the available data on the level of quality. It was found that the ordinances issued on the basis of the current laws include requirements and criteria mainly for the process of medical care, partly for the result and in a very limited form - for its structure. The quality elements to which the requirements apply are mainly efficiency, relevance and timeliness. Information from 14 selected national medical standards is presented, including types of criteria and quality indicators. The NFC with criteria and indicators for measuring the process and the result of the primary and specialized medical care was commented. The author analyzes reports and electronic databases of national and international organizations and displays the quality elements, systematizes the indicators for which data are available, their sources and identifies the need for additional data for more complete measurement of quality elements. Two significant problems have been identified that hinder the conduct of a comprehensive and in-depth study of the quality of health care in Bulgaria - the scarcity of available information and its accuracy.

In the third chapter V. Nikolova first presents the results of her survey on the quality of the health system among citizens, conducted in November 2021, in online format through the platform *survs.com*, according to the method of the respondent, through a standardized online interview. Attitudes towards measuring the quality of health care and information needs are analyzed. After that, the surveys with the medical persons were thoroughly discussed: doctors (35%), health care specialists - nurses and midwives (30%), laboratory assistants and rehabilitators (26%). The chapter ends with conclusions and summaries.

In the fourth chapter the author shows how the system of indicators for measuring and assessing the quality of health care in Bulgaria can provide guidelines for its effective management. The practical usefulness of the research is that it allows for accurate measurement and evaluation of quality, and making informed policy decisions to improve the health system. A conceptual model has been developed (p.120), containing the key elements of the quality of health care, with an emphasis on ensuring the quality of medical care for each patient (a problem that proves to be key to quality management in Bulgaria), as a prerequisite for improving health outcomes for society. The quality elements are related to the structure, process or result, respectively. A system of indicators for measuring and evaluating the quality of health care in Bulgaria has been formed, which contains 89 indicators, grouped by quality elements and relevant criteria for their evaluation. An approach is proposed through which the system of indicators for measurement and evaluation can be effectively implemented, in a sequence of four steps.

In summary, I appreciate the ability of the doctoral student to analyze, systematize and reveal important for Bulgaria problems with the quality of health care and to offer solutions to improve the system for measuring and evaluating at different levels.

II. Contributions in the dissertation

The reference for the contributions presented in the Abstract includes one scientific and four scientific-applied contributions, which I accept as a personal work of Valeria Nikolova. I believe that they really reflect the main achievements of the doctoral student as a result of her own research.

III. Notes on the dissertation

- 1) The conclusion of the dissertation is short, but it could highlight and summarize more clearly the contributing moments of the work and indicate the future directions of the research.
- 2) Self-citation was used - source 22 in the Bibliography.

VI. Abstract and Publications on the Dissertation

The abstract reproduces faithfully the content of the dissertation. It has been prepared in a volume of 43 pages and includes the sections: general characteristics of the dissertation, structure and content of dissertations, summary of the dissertation, reference to the contributions and list of publications.

Three publications were presented - two of them in Bulgarian and one in English. I consider that these publications really represent the achievements of the doctoral student from her research.

V. Conclusion

The above presented gives me reason to assume that the dissertation of Valeria Nikolova has the qualities of a completed scientific product related to the study of significant, current issues with the quality of health care. The research goal and thesis set in the paper have been met. The contributions contained in the dissertation enrich the existing knowledge and offer solutions for improvement the system for measuring and evaluating the quality of Bulgarian healthcare. The developed conceptual model and system of indicators provide an opportunity to upgrade and update, and to form well-grounded policies for effective management of the health system.

In conclusion, I give a positive assessment of the dissertation on the topic "**System of indicators for measuring and evaluating the quality of health care in Bulgaria**" and I invite the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to award PhD student **Valeria Veselinova Nikolova with educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in PN 3.7 Administration and management, specialty "Organization and management outside the field of material production (in healthcare)**".

19.06.2022 г.

Гр. Варна

Член на научното жури:


/проф. д-р Сн.Овчарова/