

STATEMENT

From Assoc. Prof. Klara Georgieva Dokova, MD, PhD
Department of Social Medicine and Health Care Organization
Medical University “Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov”, Varna

On the dissertation thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree
“Phylosophy Doctor” in the area of higher education 7. Health and Sports,
professional field 7.4 Public Health;

Title of the dissertation: **„Nurseries support for parents in the development of
children’s health behaviors”**

By Diana Neicheva Grozdeva - Foteva

According to Order No P-102-3255 /10.12.2022 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna I was appointed as an internal member of the scientific jury and with the decision of its first meeting I was appointed to prepare a Statement on the Dissertation thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Phylosophy Doctor” to Diana Neicheva Grozdeva - Foteva, a student in the PhD Programme “Nursing Management” at the Department of Nursing care, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University Varna, professional filed: 7.4. Public Health and area of higher education 7. Health and Sports.

1. Career development of the candidate

After finishing her undergraduate degree with a specialty “Nurse – child profile“ from the Medical college in Varna, in 1990, Diana Grozdeva continued steadily her professional development and education. In the year 2000 she obtained her first Master degree in “Administrative and healthcare management” at the University in Veliko Tarnovo and in 2013 her second Master Degree in “Nursing Management” from the Medical University in Varna. In the period between the two Master degrees Diana Grozdeva received a professional qualification “Teacher” from the University “Episkop K. Preslavski”, Shumen, and the Degree “Specialist” in Nursing from the Medical College in Dobrich.

Between 1990 and 1996 she worked as a nurse in the Department of low birth weight children in the Regional Hospital Dobrich. Then she started working as a teacher responsible for the practical education of students in nursing, consecutively in the Medical College in Dobrich, Medical College in Varna and the Medical University of Varna.

From 2018 Diana Grozdeva is an assistant professor at the Department of Nursing Care, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna. A substantial part of the disciplines that she is teaching are related to infants and child health: Nursing Care in Pediatrics, Nursing care for the young mother and the newborn; Nursing care for children and adults with disabilities; Philosophy and Introduction in Nursing Care.

Theoretical basis; Practical basis of Nursing care; Nursing care for patients with oncological diseases etc.

From 2020 assistant professor Grozdeva is a PhD student in the Nursing Management PhD Program at the Department of Nursing Management, Department of Nursing Care, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University Varna.

She has 28 publications. She takes active part in an educational project aimed at increasing the practical competencies of students and in research projects related to HIV/AIDS prevention and reducing stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV and AIDS.

Diana Grozdeva uses Russian language. She is a member of the Bulgarian association of the nursing care professionals, BUPHA, EUPHA, and the Bulgarian Scientific Public Health Union. Diana Grozdeva is a creative person with many and diverse artistic interests and talents.

2. Relevance of the topic of the dissertation

The topic of the PhD thesis of Diana Grozdeva: „Nurseries support for parents in the development of children’s health behaviors” puts the focus of the scientific inquiry on the most precious thing for each society – the youngest, children up to the age of three and their health, who are of utmost importance not only today in Bulgaria, but at any point in time on a global scale.

The attention towards children and early child development is a leading priority for the World health Organization and for UNESCO. Early child development is related to four of the global sustainable development goals of the United Nations. In response to the global efforts the leading scientific journal Lancet is regularly dedicating a series to the problems related to early child development (2007, 2011, 2016, 2021), in order to stimulate global research interest towards the field.

In this framework and international context the topic of the PhD thesis is relevant and important.

3. General characteristics and literature review

The PhD thesis is written on 182 pages, 60 of which are dedicated to literature review on the topic. The supplements, including authors’ materials to support the work of nurses in nurseries include 30 more pages. The literature review is based on 182 references, 99 of which are international. The wide refence list reveals that the author is well acquainted with the latest publications in the field.

The literature review is well structured and is the true merit of the dissertation. It starts with an interesting and thorough review of the historical development of organized care for toddlers (up to the age of 3 years) in Europe, in the world and in Bulgaria, revealing the personal attitude and the in depth approach of the candidate. A special attention is dedicated to the development and provision of organized care for young children in support of parents in our region and town, as well as to the imminent woman public health leader in Varna, Dr Golovina.

The normative framework regulating the nurses key role in the organized early child care in Bulgaria is studied extensively and sets the framework for the responsibilities of all nurseries team members and for the nurses' possibilities to collaborate with families in the process of health education of the youngest children in nurseries.

The aim of the dissertation thesis is clearly defined to study the nurses role in nurseries for developing healthy behaviors in children together with their parents, and for strengthening the collaboration between the nurse and the family. Six concrete tasks and four research hypotheses are formulated.

4. Research methodology assessment

With her three different studies described in the methodology section of the dissertation the researcher aims to: (1) reveal the current level of health behavior in children up to the age of 3 years in order to set the priorities in the work of nurses in nurseries and to (2) test her own methodology for strengthening the collaboration between nurses and families for the development of strong health behaviors in children.

To achieve the above she applies various research methods in the following own studies:

- a survey of parents opinion (among 844 respondents, parents of 41.6% of children visiting nurseries in Varna) on the level of health behavior and the acquiring of specific health skills by their children appropriate for their age;
- a survey of nurses' opinion (among one third, 31.5% of nurses working in the public nurseries in Varna - 49 nurses), on the level of health behavior and the acquiring of specific health skills appropriate for their age by children up to the age of 3 years, visiting nurseries;
- an intervention testing a new methodology, developed by the author, for strengthening of the collaboration between the nurse and the family in the development of child health behavior is carried as a third study. The methodology includes education of parents of children visiting one nursery in Varna. The process of parent's education creates possibilities for improving the mutual collaboration between the health professional and the parents. An observation of children whose parents fulfilled the education were observed in order to monitor changes in children specific health skills – effect of the intervention. The author has developed her own methodology for parent's education and a specific list for registering the effect of the intervention. I highly appreciate this experimental part of the studies performed for the needs of the dissertation.

4. Assessment of the results and contributions of the dissertation thesis

The results of the dissertation thesis and their discussion are structured along the six research tasks. Their presentation starts with the analysis of the provision and needs for access to nurseries care in the six (NUTS2) regions and the 28 oblasts in Bulgaria, based on official data from the National Statistical Institute. It reveals a mismatch between young families' needs and provision of nurseries places.

The starting assessment of the health skills and behavior of children up to three years of age is based on sufficiently big samples of parents and nurses working in state nurseries in Varna. The comparative analysis between parents and nurses opinion

related to the health behavior of children is very important. It reveals some discrepancies between the assessment of the health professionals and the parents related to children skills to clean their hands, face, teeth and some other hygiene skill they are expected to acquire from this early age.

The analysis of the professionals and parents efforts to develop health behaviors in children is based on the Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior and the widely applies Health Belief Model.

The surveys that were carried out assesses the opinion of the health professionals and the parents, who are the two main parties in the communication in relation to their collaborative work and their needs from further education for achieving better results in terms of improved health behavior of the children.

The results revealing that half of the respondent nurses are not ready to engage in direct collaborative work with parents for increasing the health behavior of the children and the fact that they prefer specific forms for educating parents excluding continuous direct communication with parents are thought provoking. The above coupled with the expressed need of practical manual for work reveal (but probably not fully comprehended) need for postgraduate forms of continuous education for nurses working in nurseries.

I highly appreciate the efforts from the researcher to develop her own methodology to support the work of nurses in nurseries and the fact that she manages to motivate and involve the nurses from one nursery with big number of visiting children in Varna to participate/perform an intervention (educate parents) and monitor the children for six months. The results from the intervention are impressive and confirm the above expressed need for continuous postgraduate qualification of nurses.

The results have important contribution to the real life practical work of nurses as well as to the education of nursing care professionals. Seven conclusions are formulated at the end of the work that follow the logic of formulated scientific tasks. Based on the results some recommendations are made to the Regional health directorates, higher medical universities responsible for the professional education of future professionals and BUNCP .

6. Assessment of the publications related to the PhD thesis and the personal input of the candidate

There are three fulltext publications related to the dissertation topic and one report from international scientific forum. And that is not the extensive list of all publications of the candidate. In all publications related to the dissertation Diana Grozdeva is first or the single author, which proves her personal input and contribution to the studies performed and the presented results.

7. Abstract

The abstract to the dissertation meets the requirements and adequately reflects the content of the work. It is well illustrated with tables and figures.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation thesis has a relevant and important topic, the personal scientific study is performed with well described methodology, includes big samples, and proposes author's intervention with the potential to improve the health of children in Bulgaria.

The dissertation meets the requirements of the Law for the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation of Medical University-Varna.

The dissertation thesis proves that Diana Grozdeva has thorough theoretical knowledge and professional competence, demonstrates skills to perform a scientific study and adequately present its results.

Given all of the above, I give my positive assessment with conviction and recommend to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Philosophy Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Nursing Management" to Diana Neicheva Grozdeva - Foteva.

27.01.2022

Reviewer:

/Assoc. Prof. Klara Dokova, MD, PhD/