

REVIEW

From

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositsa Nikolova Doynovska, MD

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on the dissertation on the topic: "**Obstetric care for women after childbirth - approaches and opportunities to optimize the role of the midwife**" for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral program: "**Health Care Management**", professional field 7.4 Public Health, field of higher education 7. Healthcare and sports.

Autor: **Rumyana Nikolova Laleva**

Supervisor: **Assoc. Prof. Valya Dimitrova, PhD**

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

By Order № P-109-591 / 29.12.2021 of the Rector of MU - Varna I was elected for an external member of the Scientific jury in the procedure for defense of the said dissertation. At the first meeting, I was appointed to prepare a review. The set of materials presented electronically or on a paper form has been carefully prepared according to the requirements of the procedure for acquiring ESD "Doctor" and in accordance with the requirements of the Law for Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of MU Varna for its application. The only candidate in the announced competition is assistant Rumyana Nikolova Laleva.

Assistant Rumyana Nikolova Laleva was born in the town of Kavarna. She graduated from the Higher Medical Institute in Varna in 1990 with a degree in Midwifery. In 2011 she obtained a higher education degree Bachelor in Health Care Management at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov"- Varna, and in 2012 she graduated with a Master degree in the same specialty. In the period 2015 - 2018 she is a lecturer in practice at the Department of Health Care, PHC of MU - Varna. In 2018 she held the academic position of "assistant" in the same department where she still works.

She speaks English and Russian.

The acquired qualifications and teaching experience of assistant Laleva are a prerequisite for her professional development in the doctoral program "Health Care Management".

2. Relevance of the topic

The title of the dissertation is clearly stated, in close connection with the doctoral thesis and has its scientific value. The theme developed by Assistant Professor R. Laleva is extremely relevant at the moment, when looking for and analyzing the possibilities for autonomous activity of obstetric care in the postpartum period through home obstetric visits, which are very important for the normal course of the puerperium period.

In this sense, the dissertation is devoted to an important problem in outpatient care - still insufficient use of obstetric care for counseling, training and information of pregnant women and in the postpartum period.

3. Understanding of the problem.

The doctoral student knows very well the problem she is researching. She teaches subjects directly related to the research problem and has many years of experience as a midwife. Assistant Laleva has studied and analyzed in detail a significant number of literature sources, good practices for postpartum care in many European countries and the role of midwives in this period, as well as the legal regulation of obstetric care after childbirth in our country.

The literature review is a consequence of the in-depth analysis of 178 literature sources (101 in Bulgarian language, 5 in Russian language, 46 in English language and 26 online sources), which is evidence of the doctoral student's good awareness of the reviewed problematics and building upon her knowledge of the subject of the dissertation. Most of the sources are from the last 10 years and meet the requirements of contemporaneity and relevance.

4. Research methodology

To achieve the purpose and solve the tasks of the dissertation, the author used her *own original research tools*, containing three questionnaires, which are aimed at pregnant women, first-time mothers and women giving birth a second and next child and working midwives. The developed methodology allows achieving the set goal and solving the research tasks.

5. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and contributions

The dissertation fully meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation and is presented in a total volume of 190 pages. In the structural aspect it includes an introduction, five chapters - literature review, methodology of the scientific research, own research, results and discussion, experimental program, conclusions, recommendations, contributions, bibliography and 10 applications. The survey data is illustrated with 81 figures and 15 tables.

The abstract consists of 80 pages, developed according to the requirements, accurately reflects the purpose, objectives of the study, materials and methods used, discussion of the results and conclusions, scientific and applied contributions to the dissertation.

In the *introduction*, the doctoral student convincingly presents the significance and relevance of the developed issues, motivates her choice and identifies the problems that are clarified in the individual chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter One "Literature Review" (42 pages) presents sufficiently detailed theoretical data on the importance of the chosen topic, it is well structured, analytical and shows its knowledge of Assistant Laleva. A historical overview of the development of the profession of "midwife" is made, contemporary understandings of the profession are presented. The functions of the women's consultation and the role of the midwife from its origination until today are thoroughly examined, the reasons for the lack of regulation for prenatal and patronage obstetric care are analyzed, as one of the main functions of the midwife and shifting this activity to general practitioners and specialists in obstetrics and gynecology from outpatient care. The analysis of some of the normative documents reviewed in this chapter indicates a serious imbalance between obstetric competencies in normal and pathological puerperium and the organization of their realization after the discharge from the hospital of the woman who gave birth. The PhD student presents the established practice of patronage obstetric care in a number of European countries as an opportunity for individual health care, positive effects on the mental health of women after labor, assessment of health needs, information and training for pregnant women and women who gave birth and their families.

Chapter two „Methodology of the scientific research” (12 стр.) represent logically fulfilled goals, tasks and adequately formulated working hypotheses, object, subject, scope of the study (672 respondents), logical units of the study, the indications of logical units, technical units include five maternity wards and four wards for pathological pregnancy in hospitals in the cities of Varna, Shumen, Dobrich and Targovishte, self-developed tools include three questionnaires suitable for pregnant and first-born, multi-born, midwives, research methods, research stages and description of the experiment.

The purpose of the proposed work is formulated clearly and precisely, and for its execution 10 tasks are provided for solving. The research methods are described in details, and the mail tool-kit fully corresponds to the general concept of the study.

Chapter three „Personal research, results and discussion” represents the most essential part of the dissertation. It is 64 pages long. An own study was conducted, covering a total of

672 people - pregnant, first-time, multi-born, midwife, working in the obstetrics and gynecology sector with pregnant and postpartum women. The information collected is sufficient in volume to obtain reliable results. They are skillfully analyzed and interpreted by the doctoral student.

The health needs of a significant part of pregnant and postpartum women in the mentioned cities for the period September 2020 - February 2021 were in-depth, thoroughly and purposefully studied. A profound analysis of the studied groups was done the tool-kit developed by assistant Laleva through the expectations and attitudes of pregnant women and first-time mothers regarding obstetric care after giving birth at home (questionnaire №1); the opinion of the mothers related to the postpartum period of their previous birth, the needs and the projection of potential problems in connection with the forthcoming birth, in order to specify the means and ways to cope at home (questionnaire №2). Questionnaire №3 examines and analyzes the position related to the attitudes and role of the midwife in the implementation of outpatient care for women after labor.

The data from the extensive empirical study logically confirm the working hypotheses: lack of obstetric monitoring of women after childbirth in outpatient care, deficits in care and training of women after childbirth after discharge from the maternity ward, the need for additional training for newborn care and rehabilitation care after the birth, insufficient use of the knowledge and skills of midwives for consulting and training of patients as part of the team of women's consultations, lack of regulation of home care patronage by a midwife, problems with psycho-emotional changes in the puerperium, insufficient or lack of knowledge to deal with postpartum problems period and the need of reorganization of obstetric care in the puerperium.

Chapter four presents the results of the experimental program "Midwives in support of motherhood" (25 pages). The program was conducted on the model of a prospective study and covers one hundred women who gave birth, divided into experimental and control groups, who filled in an Informed Consent to participate, as well as current midwives. All recommendations regarding the ethical side of research have been followed. The program was developed by the doctoral student, specifically for the purpose of the dissertation, and includes obstetric documentation: Map of obstetric care planning, Plan for monitoring the woman who gave birth, Supervision for intervention in the program. The developed documentation indicates the in-depth knowledge of the problem - the need for obstetric care in the puerperium, training and support to women and their families, care for emotional stability. The stress levels of both groups of women were examined using a standard Zung anxiety test, which proves the need for

professional help for each of the women studied. After the end of the program, the data show that there is a difference in anxiety levels between the two groups, and it increases at a later stage, coinciding with the period after discharge from the maternity ward. The results show that more than half of women indicate the need to restore the patronage of obstetric care. The results obtained from the answers of the midwives provoked the development of a postgraduate course "Obstetric care in the puerperium". The proposed course includes two modules - theoretical and practical and will certainly contribute to developing the knowledge and practical skills, especially of midwives with less practical experience in the field of patronage care. The included topics are based on the requested and necessary obstetric care from the conducted study.

Chapter five „Conclusions, recommendations, contributions” is the result of the study, the results obtained and their interpretation.

The following significant contributions to the dissertation are worth noting:

1. With theoretical - cognitive character:

- ✓ The medico-social aspects of obstetric care after birth and the competencies of midwives for their application through community care have been studied.
- ✓ Own developed obstetric documentation for obstetric care in the puerperium is offered.

2. With practical-applied character:

- ✓ A Model for patronage care for women after childbirth has been developed and tested, which guarantees identification of women's needs, planning of obstetric care at home and improving the quality of life for women who have given birth.

Based on the study, the role of the midwife in the realization of patronage care was objectively assessed. The present study has practico-applied value and can serve as a basis for new research and development related to the legally regulated functions of the midwife and the established imbalance in their practical application. I accept the recommendations made by assistant Laleva to the relevant institutions.

6. Assessment of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

The doctoral student presented four full-text publications related to the dissertation - three in Bulgarian and one in Russian. Two have been published in scientific journals and two in proceedings of international conferences. The doctoral student is the first author in four publications. The number and quality of publications in large extent reflect the results achieved

in the dissertation research. The presented publications are sufficient in volume and are in the thematic areas of the scientific field.

The dissertation work and the contributions in it are the result of the long-term work and scientific research of the doctoral student, which is why I think in large extent are her personal work.

7. Abstract of the dissertation

The abstract fully corresponds to the content and structure of the dissertation and emphasizes its most important contributing aspects.

8. Critical remarks and recommendations

The notes are of editorial and substantive nature - on the title page of the abstract is written "... for the award of educational degree" Doctor ", and must be "and scientific ". There is a discrepancy in the spelling of the titles in the chapters of the dissertation and the abstract. I believe that each chapter in the dissertation should end with conclusions that are specific and give a better idea of the results achieved.

Recommendations:

1. To popularize the author's developments for home obstetric care among colleagues from the professional management.
2. Increase publications in editions that are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information.

CONCLUSION

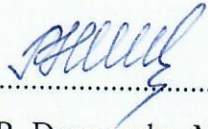
In conclusion, I should note that the presented dissertation has the necessary qualities and will contribute to a positive change in the possibilities for legal regulation and the introduction of community obstetric care. It is distinguished by a number of advantages in theoretical and experimental terms. The author achieves her goals and presents convincing results in confirmation of the research hypothesis.

I believe that the dissertation of assistant Rumyana Nikolova Laleva fully meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Composition in the Republic of Bulgaria (DACRB), the Regulations for the implementation of DACRB and the Regulations of MU - Varna.

The above gives me grounds to vote positively and to propose to the Honored Scientific Jury to award the assistant Romyana Nikolova Laleva educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral program "Health Care Management".

21. 01. 2022

Blagoevgrad

Review prepared by: 

/ Assoc. Prof. Dr. R. Doynovska, MD/