

STATEMENT

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IN REFERENCE TO: the dissertation thesis of Teodorika Vitalinova Panayotova, MD, for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor (PhD)" in Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna, specialty - Oncology, entitled "Impact of distance and travel time to cancer center on lung carcinoma treatment outcomes" with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Vladimirov Conev, MD, PhD.

The dissertation of Dr. Teodorika Vitalinova Panayotova is dedicated to a present and significant problem for modern medicine, namely patients with lung cancer and the directed search for factors with prognostic and predictive role that would improve their prognosis.

Despite the advances of modern medicine, screening, diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer pose a number of challenges and ambiguities to healthcare professionals. With approximately 2.2 million newly diagnosed patients and 1.8 million deaths, lung cancer is the most commonly diagnosed malignant neoplasm and the leading cause of cancer-related death in 2020. Lung cancer is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in men, while for women lung cancer is responsible for the third highest incidence after breast cancer and colorectal cancer and the second highest mortality rate after breast cancer. The prevalence and mortality rate are approximately 2 times higher in men than in women. Published data suggest that lung cancer meets the definition of a socially significant disease and, as such, should be a priority for healthcare professionals, pharmacological industry and healthcare authorities. In recent years, significant resources have been spent on identifying factors with prognostic role that would lead to better survival, longer therapy response and improved quality of life. There aren't many known analyzes in the literature aimed at studying the role of time and distance to the oncology center as factors of importance for patient survival. In this context, the point of view for a topic of Dr. Teodorika

Panayotova is innovative and has the potential to contribute to prognosis improvement of patients with advanced lung cancer.

The presented dissertation contains 118 pages, of which: Introduction - 2 pages, Literature Review - 58 pages, Aim and objectives - 1 page, Hypotheses - 2 pages, Materials and methods - 1 page, Results - 9 pages, Discussion – 10 pages, Summary – 3 pages, Conclusions – 1 page, Contributions – 1 page, Publications and participations in scientific forums related to the dissertation – 3 pages. The dissertation is illustrated with 6 tables and 15 figures. The bibliography includes 259 titles, of which 1 in Cyrillic and 258 in Latin. By its structure, the dissertation is well balanced, the individual sections are clearly formulated, the proportions are respected. The scientific work meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Scientific Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

At the beginning of the dissertation, abbreviations used are described, which builds the impression of clarity and facilitates familiarization with the subject of scientific analysis.

The introduction is clearly and purposefully gradually constructed into the specifics of the main problem of the analysis. The literature review is based on a large volume of studied literature. It is characterized by wide scope, complexity and reflects basic aspects of epidemiology, risk factors, genetics, epigenetics, diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer. Particular attention is paid to the role of multidisciplinary approach in diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer, as well as the role of time and distance as prognostic factors, which are divided into separate subdivisions and are a natural transition to the significant part of the dissertation.

The aim is clear, precisely formulated and in full accordance with the topic of the dissertation. The objectives set are specific, apprehensible and meet the aim.

The materials and specific methods of research are adequate to the set aim and objectives. The exact selection of statistical design and analysis, as well as the accuracy of the exposed data is impressive. Descriptive, correlative statistics and survival analysis were used for statistical processing of the collected data.

In chapter "Results" Dr. Panayotova presents author's data from a study, includes impressive cohort of 9240 patients with lung cancer. Description of the results fully corresponds to aims set and is precisely illustrated with the help of graphs, figures and tables.

In chapter "Discussion" the ability of the dissertant to analyze and criticize impartially by examining the problem in depth and understanding and pointing out not only the advantages but also the disadvantages of the dissertation.

The conclusions published are 7. They are a brief synthesis of the results obtained.

The dissertation summary is 48 pages and contains the main chapters of the dissertation.

The dissertation is related to 6 publications, 2 of which are in international editions with an impact factor. The inquiry made in advance confirms the initial impression that dissertation thesis developed by Dr. Teodorika Panayotova fully meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic Bulgaria and the Rules for the development of the academic staff in MU – Varna for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor."

The topic of the dissertation is original. Results are convincing, contributions are indisputable, and the dissertation should receive a positive evaluation. The study of Dr. Teodorika Panayotova meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff for the acquisition of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" and I suggest to the highly respected Scientific Jury to award to Dr Teodorika Vitalinova Panayotova educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR (PhD)".

Prepared the statement:

/Prof. Petranka Troyanova, MD, PhD/

