

REVIEW

from

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Appointed as an external member of the Scientific Jury according to Order No. R 109-555 / 14.12.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, on the basis of Protocol No. 1/ 22.12. 2023 is set for the preparation of the Review

Regarding the dissertation on the topic: "**Factors influencing the choice of pregnant women for elective delivery. Role of the Midwife**" for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral program "Healthcare Management" in the field of higher education 7. Health and sports, professional direction 7.4 Public health

Author: **Polina Ivanova Dragneva**

Form of doctoral studies: full-time doctoral student

Department of Health Care, Sliven branch of the MU - Varna

Research supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Diana Dimitrova, Ph.D.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

Assist. Polina Ivanova Dragneva is enrolled in full-time doctoral studies at the Health Care Department of the Sliven branch of the MU "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna with Order No. R - 109-250/01.08.2019 of the Rector of the MU - Varna. She has passed the required doctoral minimum. By rector's order No. P-109-417/ 03.10.2023, she was dismissed with the right of defense.

In connection with the procedure, I have been presented with a set of materials on paper/electronic media in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for its Implementation and Article 69 of the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff of MU-Varna and includes all the necessary documents for the procedure for public defense of a dissertation. They have been prepared precisely and I believe that they fully comply with the requirements of the regulatory framework. The set includes:

- Application to the Rector of the MU - Varna;
- Autobiography;

- Copy of diploma for completed OKS "master";
- Enrollment order;
- Deduction Order with Right of Defense;
- Protocol of doctoral minimum;
- Statement of Credibility;
- Declaration of originality;
- Declaration of scientific profile registration in ORCID, ID and Google Scholar;
- List and copies of publications related to the topic of the dissertation work

2. Brief biographical data for the doctoral student

Assist. Polina Dragneva was born in 1993 in Sliven. In 2015, she graduated from TU - Stara Zagora, OKS "Bachelor" in the specialty "Midwife" from the professional direction "Health Care", and in 2019 she also acquired a master's degree in "Health Care Management". There are a number of additional qualifications and courses. Fluent in English and Spanish.

She began her work experience in 2016 as a midwife in the obstetrics and gynecology department of "Dr. Ivan Seliminski" General Hospital, Sliven. From March 2023 to the present, she holds the academic position of "assistant" in the Sliven Branch of the Medical University of Varna, Asst. Dragneva actively participates in the teaching and administrative activities of the department.

3. Evaluation of the actuality of the topic

The topicality of the issue is determined by a recently alarming problem, namely the increasing frequency of Caesarean section (CS) as a method of childbirth, both in Bulgaria and worldwide. The decision to perform CS is made according to certain indications that determine a lower risk for the mother and the fetus. But some of the births completed by operation are not indicated for medical reasons. More often, they are related to the pregnant woman's fears of pain, the duration of vaginal delivery and her desire for a quick delivery, through an operative delivery, which is defined as an elective caesarean section. But any surgical intervention carries risks for both the pregnant woman and the newborn.

Recently used quite often, this practice is the basis of the PhD student's desire to develop the present work, with the emphasis being placed on the social and psycho-emotional factors influencing the choice of pregnant women for elective delivery.

4. Awareness of the problem

The doctoral student has presented an in-depth literature review in a volume of 68 pages, from which a complex idea of the state of the studied problem is obtained. The bibliographic reference includes 242 literary sources, of which 56 are in Cyrillic and 186 are in Latin. Analyzing these sources, Assist. Dragneva structured six sections with subsections, in which she examines in detail the problems related to operative births. Historically, it has examined the evolution of Caesarean section from ancient times to the present day. She presented a number of demographic data on the percentage ratio of operative deliveries

worldwide and in our country. She described the absolute and relative medical indications for caesarean section and compared the statistics for cesarean sections performed for obstetric and non-obstetric indications. The doctoral student devoted a significant place in the overview to the risk factors and consequences related to operative delivery, taking into account the statistically higher risk of mortality with it.

According to the WHO, the share of caesarean section should not exceed 12-15%, but from the statistical samples presented by the NSI, it is clear that the rate of births by operative route has increased in recent years, and in 2022 they will be more than 50% of all births .

The literature review ends with conclusions pointing to the sought problems and solutions, which shows the good literary awareness of the doctoral student on the problem

5. Research methodology

Based on the analyzed data in the literature, Assist. Dragneva has clearly defined the purpose of her dissertation - to study, analyze and summarize the awareness, attitudes, psycho-emotional and social factors influencing the choice of pregnant women in Bulgaria for elective delivery. The tasks are logical, relevant to the purpose of the research, and with their solution the work gains completeness and fullness. The formulated working hypotheses are concrete and clear. An empirical sociological study was conducted related to the possibility of changing the attitudes of pregnant women by facilitating access to reliable information. For this purpose, Assistant Professor Dragneva used a variety of research methods - theoretical analysis, documentary method with content analysis of the documents and sociological method. An individual anonymous survey was conducted with its own research toolkit, containing three questionnaires aimed at separate groups of respondents: 100 pregnant women, 50 midwives and 51 students of the "Midwifery" specialty, which allows for an in-depth analysis of the researched problems. Mathematically - the statistical methods for processing and analyzing the collected data are presented correctly and illustrate the obtained results.

6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation was developed in a volume of 158 pages and is structured as follows: introduction, chapter one - literature review, chapter two - methodology, chapter three - results and discussion, chapter four - conclusions, contributions and recommendations, literature used and appendices. The results are graphically presented in 48 figures and 47 tables. The appendices only include informative brochures for pregnant women and the questionnaires for the respondent groups are missing from the appendices.

The introduction convincingly substantiates the relevance of the problem and the motivation of Assist. Dragneva for choosing the topic of the dissertation work.

In the review of the literary sources, the doctoral student analyzes our and foreign authors referring to the problem of the increasing rate of operative births, in particular elective cesarean sections. Given the higher risk to the life and health of the mother, the reasons why women make a choice in favor of cesarean section without medical indications

are sought. This provoked interest in the state of the problem in our country and justified the need to conduct the present study.

The third chapter represents the essence of the dissertation work. In a volume of 50 pages, the results of our own research are presented. They are illustrated in the attached colored figures, tables and graphs, which are presented in detail. 201 individuals divided into three main groups (100 midwives, 51 students and 50 pregnant women) were included. The study was conducted after receiving permission from the Research Ethics Committee at MU-Varna - Minutes/Decision #116, meeting on 04/28/2022. The information is sufficient in volume, which implies reliable results.

The analysis is structured in six parts, in which Assist. Dragneva interprets the obtained results.

In the first part, the demographic indicators of the respondents regarding age, education, place of work and place of residence are analyzed.

In the second and third part, the factors and reasons influencing women's choice for elective childbirth are studied and analyzed. The results show that the main leading factor is the "fear of pain" during normal childbirth, which provokes the thought of a quick delivery and the making of such a decision easier; advice of the obstetrician-gynecologist monitoring the pregnancy; medical indications; safety for the baby, etc." The study found a link between the order of birth and the pregnant woman's choice of delivery method. The relative share of first-time mothers who prefer to give birth naturally is 53%, but among those who give birth for the second time, this share drops to 29%, which is probably due to experienced negative memories of the first birth and motivates their desire for a subsequent section.

In the comparative analysis of the opinion of all three groups of respondents (pregnant women - 44%, midwives - 36% and students - 45%), the data again point to the fear of pain as the leading reason for an elective caesarean section. Assist. Dragneva studied the influence of other factors related to the fear of the pregnant woman. She finds that the age and education of the woman are directly related to the degree of fear.

The fourth and fifth parts are about women's awareness. The alarming trend related to the ever-increasing rate of cesarean section is also confirmed by the opinion of the three groups studied regarding the number of operative births. According to pregnant women, it is 50%, and according to midwives and students – 60%. This proves the need to conduct courses for pregnant women and provide detailed information about the dangers of giving birth with an unindicated section. The researcher is looking for the relationship between the level of awareness of pregnant women and the factors that determine it - educational status, age and order of birth. The results show that low education, young age and first-time mothers are the least informed about the possible risks.

There is a need to provide reliable and scientifically based information that meets the individual needs of the woman and will be a good alternative in making a decision about the upcoming birth. The data show that the majority of respondents (89.1%) believe that the midwife should play a leading role in informing pregnant women about operative delivery.

The research shows that both midwives and students are aware of the profession's responsibility and are confident that they have the competencies to inform pregnant women.

In the sixth part, the doctoral student analyzes the opinion of the respondents on the approaches to reduce operative births without serious medical indications. The importance of prenatal preparation and the need for psycho-physical preparation in women's consultation is proven again.

7. Contributions and significance of the dissertation work

I accept the following contributions of theoretical-cognitive and practical-applied importance, which the results of the scientific study and the formulated conclusions outline:

Contributions of a theoretical nature:

1. The factors related to the increasing rate of operative births in Bulgaria have been identified;
2. The relationship between awareness of the method of birth and reduction in operative birth rates has been established;
3. The leading reasons that correlate with the choice of elective delivery of pregnant women in our country have been established;

Contributions of a practical nature:

1. The lack of information among pregnant women related to the risks of cesarean delivery has been proven;
2. A training module for pregnant women has been developed within courses for pregnant women, which informs expectant mothers about the methods of childbirth, the potential risks and complications of cesarean section;

As a result of the analysis carried out in the dissertation, assist. Dragneva makes recommendations related to obstetric care, which are aimed at a number of institutions - BAPZG, ABA, MU, AG hospitals, etc.

8. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work

Doctoral student Assist. Dragneva presents 5 publications related to the topic of the dissertation, in which she is an independent author. Four of them were presented at an international scientific online conference - Stara Zagora and one at the Third Scientific Conference - Varna. They are published in the respective collections of reports.

9. Abstract

The presented abstract in a volume of 60 pages is designed according to the legal requirements, with high-quality illustrative material and reflects the dissertation work in a concise form, correctly and in full.

10. Personal participation of the doctoral student

In the proposed dissertation work, the dissertation student has a complete personal involvement and all given conclusions, contributions and obtained results are his personal credit.

11. Critical notes to the doctoral student

The questionnaires of the individual groups of respondents are not presented in the appendices, and there is a lack of theoretical justification for the proposed "Pregnant Women Training Module", which is presented only schematically in the appendix. I would recommend that the conclusions should not be so circumstantial, but should be synthesized and summarized.

Critical notes do not diminish the value of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

Presented dissertation "Factors influencing the choice of pregnant women for elective delivery. "Role of the midwife" by Polina Ivanova Dragneva fulfills all the requirements of a completed doctoral dissertation, contains contributions of theoretical and applied-practical significance and fully meets the criteria of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at the MU - Varna.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the specialty "Health Care Management", demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Based on the complex assessment of the dissertation work and the abstract, I give my positive assessment and propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Assist. Polina Dragneva in the specialty "Health Care Management" in professional direction 7.4 Public Health in area of Higher Education 7. Health care and sports.

6.02.2024

Prepared the review 

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Prof. Delyana Hadzhideleva, PhD