

STANDPOINT

By Assoc. Prof. Teodora Nikolaeva Evtomova, PhD

Department of Health Care, Shumen Affiliate
Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" – Varna

On the doctoral thesis entitled:

“Factors Affecting the Choice of Pregnant Women for Elective Delivery”

By Polina Ivanova Dragneva

in fulfillment of the requirements for the educational and scientific degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Higher education area: 7. Health Care and Sports

Professional field 7.4. Public Health

Specialty: Health Care Management

Information about the procedure

I present this standpoint as a member of the Scientific Jury assigned with Order № P-109-555/14.12.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna, regarding Polina Ivanova Dragneva's doctoral thesis defense for acquiring the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Philosophy.

By Order № P-109-250/01.08.2019 of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna, Polina Dragneva was enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the doctoral program „Health Care Management”, Higher education area 7. Health Care and Sports. Professional field 7.4. Public Health. Her scientific supervisor is Assoc. Prof. Diana Dimitrova, PhD. Taking into account the decision of the Department Council meeting of the Department of Health Care at Sliven Affiliate about the PhD student's readiness for public defense and scientific jury selection, Polina Dragneva was dismissed with the right to defense by Order № P-109-417/03.10.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna. Protocols for successfully passed exams to cover the doctoral minimum requirements in “Health Care Management” specialty and foreign language proficiency level B1 were presented.

Biographic data of the doctoral student

Polina Ivanova Dragneva completed her basic medical education at Trakia University – Stara Zagora in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in the Midwifery specialty. In 2019, she acquired the educational qualification master's degree in „Health Care Management” specialty at Trakia University – Stara Zagora. She started her professional career in 2016 as a midwife at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of MHAT „Dr. Ivan Seliminski” – Sliven. Since March 2023, she has been appointed to the position of Assistant Professor at Sliven Affiliate to MU – Varna. At the Department of Health Care of Sliven Affiliate, she conducts seminars in disciplines enhancing professional theoretical knowledge and practical midwifery skills, clinical practice and pre-graduate internship for Midwifery students.

General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation presented by Polina Dragneva encompasses a total of 129 pages, with standard for the professional field structure including four chapters (Literature review, Methodology, Results and discussion, Conclusions, contributions and recommendations), publications, related to the dissertation and literary sources. The presented scientific work is illustrated with 48 figures, 47 tables and 4 appendices. The respondent questionnaire cards are not included in the appendices. The bibliographic reference includes 242 literary sources, of which 56 in Cyrillic, 181 in Latin and 5 Internet sources.

Structure and content evaluation of the dissertation

The doctoral student has directed her scientific interest to a studied but yet current problem, regarding the social and psycho-emotional factors affecting the choice of pregnant women for elective surgical delivery.

The Literature review presents a retrospective view of the history of caesarean birth. The main risk factors and the consequences regarding surgical delivery both for the mother and the health and development of the child are examined. Emotionally, caesarean section is associated with an increased frequency of postpartum depression, breastfeeding problems and difficulty in mother – baby bonding. The epidemiology of caesarean surgical delivery in some EU countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Greece), the USA and Canada draws the conclusion that caesarean section is a global trend which is also followed by the Bulgarian obstetrician-gynecologists.

In the final part of the Literature review, the conclusions are formulated in 4 directions:

- cases in which caesarean section is performed on patient request (of the pregnant woman) without medical indications are becoming more common.
- the fear of childbirth, of pain, of possible complications (for the mother and the baby) is essential for the increase in the number of elective delivery.
- the increasing number of caesarean births leads to resection without medical indications.
- the lack of reliable, scientific and timely information provided to women results in increased chances for elective surgical delivery.

Chapter Two presents the research methodology. The main **aim** of the dissertation is to study, analyze and summarize the factors (awareness, attitudes, psycho-emotional and social), influencing the choice of pregnant women in Bulgaria for elective surgical delivery. Six tasks were set and four working hypotheses were formulated.

The survey conducted was among three groups of respondents: – **pregnant women**, (n = 100), **midwives** (n = 50) and **students** (n = 51).

The same questionnaire of 13 questions was used for both groups of respondents (midwives and midwifery students), which makes the scientific research insufficiently comprehensive. The study stages with the activities, instruments, place and scope are presented in tables. The short period (03.05. 2022 – 28.06. 2022) through which the survey among the three groups of respondents was conducted arouses interest (n = 201).

Chapter Three presents the results and analysis of primary sociological research.

The demographic characteristics of the three groups surveyed is related to their age, level of education, workplace, and place of residence.

By performing a Chi-Square test to verify the values studied, a relationship was established between the sequence of pregnancies and the preferences for elective birth. Among women who demonstrated desire to give birth per vias naturales, the proportion of first-time mothers is the largest: they prefer natural birth (53%), while the share of second-time mothers drops to 29%.

Comparative analysis of the opinion of the three groups of respondents (pregnant women, midwives and students) about the factors affecting the choice for elective birth is presented. The respondents are united in their opinion about the main reason, namely the fear of pain (44% : 36% : 45%) .

For pregnant women, elective caesarean section is faster and easier (14%). This result can be considered in the context of missing or unreliable information about the risks of surgical delivery and the opinion that quick and easy delivery guarantees the quality of midwifery practice.

Pregnant women share the opinion that caesarean birth is a modern trend (10%) or following the example of friends (7%).

There are no studies in our country examining the opinion and behavior of obstetrician-gynecologists about the reasons for elective surgical delivery. Furthermore, there are no such regulations in the „Obstetrics and Gynecology” Medical Standards.

Comparative analysis of the approaches to lowering the rates of surgical delivery was carried out. The informedness (pregnancy courses, information campaigns) about the methods of delivery, the complications and risk evaluation is the main factor for the solution to the problem studied. The psychophysical preparation for childbirth at Antenatal Surgeries is the direction in which health professionals have competencies.

As a practically applicable contribution, the doctoral students developed a **Pregnant women training module** within pregnancy courses, which lacks theoretical grounds and detailed explanation of midwifery activities and roles.

The conclusions drawn are not relevant to the aim and the tasks set by the researcher. I consider the following conclusions to be significant:

- The fear of pain is the main reason for elective delivery request (the highest levels of fear are among the youngest first-time pregnant women with primary education);
- The study outlined a relationship between the sequence of pregnancies and the preferences for elective delivery. The relationship is well-demonstrated in first pregnancy and first birth.
- The less informed women about elective delivery are with primary education, in the age group 18-24, whose upcoming birth is first;
- 91% of pregnant women believe that they must be informed about the dangers regarding CS by the hospital teams at the Maternity wards;

In the dissertation, the results are illustrated with figures and tables containing identical information. (e.g. fig. 9/ fig. 10 – table 6; fig. 15 -table 9 /table 10; fig.18 –table15;

fig. 20 – table 17; fig. 30 – table 41)

The doctoral student presented 5 single-authored publications related to the dissertation. All the papers are connected with the topics examined in the dissertation.

The author's **Summary** meets the requirements of the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna in terms of structure and content.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation „Factors Affecting the Choice of Pregnant Women for Elective Delivery” meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations to it, and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at „Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

The abovementioned accounts for my positive assessment of the presented dissertation for the educational and scientific degree „Doctor” to be awarded to Polina Ivanova Dragneva in „Health Care Management” specialty, Higher education area 7. Health Care and Sports, Professional field 7.4. Public Health.

24.01.2024

Standpoint by:

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679

Assoc. Prof. Teodora Evtimova, PhD