

# О P I N I O N

of Assoc. Prof. Lilyia Georgieva Aleksandrova-Zisova, MD.

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Medical University - Plovdiv

On the dissertation paper for the award of **PhD**  
area of higher education 7. Health and Sport,  
professional field 7.1 Medicine,  
Doctoral Program "Dermatology and Venereology"  
on topic

## "EPIDEMIOLOGICAL, CLINICAL AND IMMUNOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PEMPHIGUS"

**Author: Dr. Zhaneta Zhelyazkova**

**Form of PhD:** full-time PhD student

**Department** of Dermatology and Venereology, Medical Faculty, Medical University - Plovdiv

**Scientific supervisor:** Assoc.Prof. Dr. Tsvetana Abadzhieva, MD

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Faculty of Medicine, Medical University - Plovdiv

### 1. General presentation of the procedure

On the basis of Order No: P 3039/ 23.10. 2023 of the Rector of Medical University - Plovdiv, I have been elected as a member of the scientific jury for the award of the "PhD" scientific degree.

The set of materials submitted to me on electronic media is in accordance with the procedure for the acquisition of "PhD" educational and scientific degree and the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" at MU Plovdiv from 2021 and includes the following documents:

- Dissertation paper
- Abstract
- List and copies of scientific publications and communications on the topic of the dissertation paper
- Minutes of the Departmental Council for Enrollment

The PhD student has attached 4 publications related to the dissertation paper.

### 2. Brief biographical data about the PhD student

Dr. Zhaneta Hristova Zhelyazkova was born on 23.11.1994 in Yambol. She completed her secondary education with excellent grades at "Atanas Radev" Secondary school of mathematics in Yambol in 2013. She graduated from the Medical University of Plovdiv in 2019 with excellent grades.

Since March 2020, after winning a competition, she has been enrolled as a regular PhD student at the Department of Dermatology and Venereology at the Medical University - Plovdiv, with the topic of her PhD thesis "Epidemiological, clinical and immunological aspects of pemphigus" and scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetana Abadzhieva, MD.

Since 22.04.2020 Dr. Zhelyazkova has been conducting regular specialization in skin and venereal diseases at the Clinic of Skin and Venereal Diseases, "St. George" University Hospital - Plovdiv, with Head of Clinic Prof. Dr. Hristo Dobrev, MD.

Dr. Zhaneta Zhelyazkova is fluent in English and computer literate.

Her research interests are mainly in the field of bullous dermatoses.

Dr. Zhelyazkova is the first author or co-author in a total of 4 publications in scientific journals and collections.

Dr. Zhelyazkova is a member of EADV, Bulgarian Dermatological Society and Bulgarian Medical Association.

### **3. Topical relevance**

Pemphigus vulgaris is a rare life-threatening autoimmune bullous dermatosis mediated by autoantibodies against the desmoglein adhesion structures of the epidermis.

The disease manifests clinically with loose blisters followed by painful erosion on the skin and visible mucous membranes.

The dissertation paper is topical.

The dissertation research has, besides its scientific and practical value, it explores the epidemiological, clinical, therapeutic and immunological aspects in patients with pemphigus.

The studies expand the dermatologist's knowledge in the field of autoimmune bullous dermatoses.

### **4. Knowledge of the problem**

Dr. Zhelyazkova has presented an extensive review and bibliography, from which it is evident that the PhD student has sufficient knowledge of the problem.

### **5. Research methodology**

The study included a total of 109 hospitalized patients diagnosed and treated at the Clinic of Skin and Venereal Diseases at "St. George" University Hospital, Plovdiv, for the period from January 2010 to December 2022.

In her dissertation study, the doctoral student has used medical history, clinical methods - a method for analyzing the medical history data; a method for assessing the severity of the disease using a standardized scale - PDAI (Pemphigus Disease Area Index); laboratory methods - histological examination, direct immunofluorescence, enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), appropriate statistical methods.

The chosen methodology of the research allows to fulfill the goal and objectives set in the dissertation paper.

### **6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation paper and contributions**

The dissertation paper is written in 150 standard typewritten pages and is illustrated with 2 tables and 35 figures. The bibliographic list contains 336 references, of which 18 are in Cyrillic and 318 in Latin.

It contains: introduction, literature review, own research with aim and objectives, material and methods, results and discussion, inferences and conclusion, contributions, bibliography, list of publications and contributions on the topic, acknowledgements.

The introduction and the review are written in a fair length and very good awareness of the problem under development. The literature review is informative and comprehensive.

The aim and objectives of the thesis are clearly and precisely formulated.

Dr. Zhaneta Zhelyazkova has set herself a clear and precise goal:

To study and analyze some epidemiological, clinical, therapeutic and immunological aspects in patients with pemphigus.

The studies are grouped into four main areas:

1. In-depth epidemiological study of patients with pemphigus in the South Central region of Bulgaria.
2. The clinical studies in the dissertation paper are focused on the clinical features, therapeutic schemes, patient adherence to treatment, remissions without therapy.
3. Follow-up of patients with pemphigus during COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Test for the presence of anti-Dsg1 and/or anti-Dsg3 antibodies by ELISA in 38 of the pemphigus patients.

#### **7. Evaluation of contributions**

The contributions of the dissertation are 7 in number.

Contributions of original character: 2 Scientific contributions of original character for Bulgaria: 2

Scientific contributions of confirmatory and theoretical character: 3

All contributions can be accepted.

#### **8. Assessment of publications and personal contribution of the PhD student**

The publications related to the dissertation paper are 4.

Publications in Bulgarian journals: 4.

The number of submitted publications meets the required quantitative criteria set out in the Regulations for Academic Development of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

#### **9. Personal participation of the PhD student**

Dr. Zhelyazkova was personally involved in the research related to the thesis.

The obtained results, conclusions and contributions are entirely to her credit.

#### **10. Abstract**

The abstract consists of 47 pages. The abstract is a summarized version of the material included in the dissertation paper.

#### **11. Critical comments and recommendations**

I would recommend that clinical pictures of patients with pemphigus, pictures of histological examination and direct immunofluorescence be added to the abstract and dissertation paper, which would enrich them.

The duration of therapy-free remission in patients with pemphigus treated with corticosteroids and adjuvant immunosuppressants should be indicated.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Dr. Zhaneta Zhelyazkova has selected a current topic for her dissertation paper, has correctly formulated the goals and objectives, has used research methods, has made relevant conclusions and contributions of a scientifically theoretical nature and scientifically applied nature. The dissertation paper shows that the PhD student Dr. Janeta Zhelyazkova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

I confidently give a **positive assessment** of the conducted research and propose the honorable scientific jury to award the PhD degree to Dr. Janeta Zhelyazkova in the doctoral program in Dermatology and Venereology.

13.11. 2023

Reviewer:...  
/Assoc.Prof. Dr. Lilyia Georgieva Aleksandrova-Zisova, MD/

Заличено на основание  
Чл.5 §1, 6."В" Регламент (ЕС)2016/679