

REVIEW

by Professor Tsvetelina Valentinova Miteva, MD

Department of "General medicine, forensic medicine and ethics",

Public Health Faculty

at Medical University – Pleven

on the dissertation of Dr. Gergana Vaneva Apostolova
for award on educational and scientific degree

" doctor "

by

doctoral program "General medicine"

on topic: " Vaccination behavior of Bulgarian general practitioners with a focus
on the human papillomavirus vaccine"

General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

The dissertation submitted to me for review is intended for discussion by a scientific jury, appointed by order No. R-7252/23.12.2025 of the Rector of MU-Plovdiv. I have received all the necessary documents for the procedure.

Dr. Apostolova completed her medical studies at MU Plovdiv in 2019. She currently works as a general practitioner AIPPMP "Dr. Elenski" EOOD. She successfully completed her studies as a full-time doctoral student in the doctoral program "General Medicine" at the Department of "Urology and General Medicine" of the Ministry of Health at MU-Plovdiv and from 03.12.2025, upon the proposal of the Constitutional Court of the Department of "Urology and General Medicine", protocol No. 5 of 02.12.2025 and Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Ministry of Health at MU Plovdiv - pr. No. 10/03.12.2025, with order No. R-6885/8.12.2025, she was discharged with the right to defense. She has published 3 articles related to the dissertation.

Relevance of the topic and structuring of the work

The presented dissertation examines one of the most sensitive topics in modern primary health care - the role of general practitioners in building trust and support for immunizations, with a particular emphasis on the human papillomavirus vaccine. The scientific work is distinguished by a clearly recognizable public significance, as low HPV vaccine coverage in our country

continues to be a critical problem, and internationally, interest in behavioral determinants of vaccination is growing.

The work is conceptually well-organized. The author not only offers a description of GPs' attitudes, but also explores the complex mechanisms behind decisions to recommend or withhold vaccination - professional norms, subjective beliefs, institutional factors, and social influences. This gives the dissertation an interdisciplinary character that goes beyond traditional medical research and brings it closer to contemporary directions in public health and health psychology.

The literature review is well structured, demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the international scientific discussion on the topic. The author's ability to place the Bulgarian situation in a broader European and global context is particularly valuable. The important role of doctor-patient communication and trust in institutions is emphasized - two dimensions that are often neglected in traditional medical analyses.

The methodology is carefully selected and clearly presented. The use of a standardized instrument (Pro-VC-Be), which is adapted to Bulgarian conditions, guarantees reliability and allows the results to be compared with other countries. The procedures for selecting participants and processing data are correctly described. One of the strong elements is the careful formulation of ethical aspects, which is especially important in research involving professional behavior.

The results are logically presented and allow for a multi-layered interpretation. They outline a profile of GPs in which support for immunizations is dominant, but there are clearly identified areas of uncertainty - information gaps, hesitation regarding communication with parents, insufficient institutional support and the influence of the media environment. The author manages to deduce not only statistical dependencies, but also meaningful connections related to real clinical practice.

The discussion demonstrates a very good scientific maturity. Here the ability to interpret the results both through theoretical models and through the practical realities of primary care is evident. Important conclusions are drawn concerning the educational preparation of future doctors, the need for structured communication tools for working with parents, and the need for a clearer and more consistent institutional policy regarding the HPV vaccine.

An important direction for future work is the development of interventions — training, organizational, or communication — based on the results of this study.

The contributions of the dissertation are clearly defined and multifaceted. Among them, the following can be highlighted: the adaptation and application of an internationally validated instrument to Bulgarian conditions; the identification of key determinants of vaccination behavior of GPs; the formulation of practical recommendations applicable in clinical practice and in national policies; and the contribution to the scientific development of general medicine as an academic discipline.

The dissertation is written in a clear scientific style, with consistency, good language expression and correct terminology. The tables and graphs are clearly formatted and aid in understanding the results.

Dr. Apostolova's dissertation work meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of MU Plovdiv. The work has high scientific, applied and public value and testifies to the excellent training of Dr. Gergana Apostolova as a researcher.

Given these circumstances, I believe that the presented dissertation meets all regulatory requirements and I support the awarding of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Dr. Gergana Apostolova.

12.01.2026

Prepared the review:
Prof. Tsvetelina Valentinova, MD

Заличено на основание
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