

To the members of the scientific jury,
Appointed by Order No. R-5631/30.09.2026
of the Rector of MU-Plovdiv

REVIEW

By Assoc. Prof. Petar Bozhinov, MD, PhD

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Regarding the procedure for the public of the dissertation of Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova, a full-time PhD student at the Department of Social Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Public Health, MU-Plovdiv; on the topic "Models of Pricing and Payment for Outpatient Dental Care Services" under the doctoral program "Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy," professional field 7.1. Medicine; with scientific supervisors: Prof. Nina Musurlieva, MD, PhD, and Prof. Ralitsa Raycheva, MD, PhD.

1. Description of the documents and materials submitted for the competition:

The documents and materials submitted for the competition comply with the Regulations for the Application of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), as well as the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Plovdiv.

2. Presentation of the PhD student (professional and academic development):

Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova graduated from the Faculty of Dental Medicine in Plovdiv in 1992. She began working as a staff dentist in 1996 at the Outpatient Dental Clinic in the town of Karlovo. In 1996, she opened her own dental practice in Plovdiv. On April 1, 2022, following a successful competitive selection process, she was appointed as an Assistant- Professor at the Department of Social Medicine and Public Health at the Medical University of Plovdiv. In 2025, she obtained a specialty in Public Dental Health.

3. Relevance of the topic:

The selected topic is timely and holds significant practical importance for dental practice. The issue of financing and transparency in dental services has always been a matter of interest to both the public and dental practitioners. According to the author, there is a discrepancy between the actual costs of providing dental care

and the mechanisms of payment, a limited link between quality and remuneration, and a need for greater transparency and predictability for patients. The author rightly approaches pricing not merely as a purely economic issue, but in the context of the organization and management of the healthcare system, professional motivation, access to dental care, and patient interests.

Understanding of the subject matter:

The overall impression of the work submitted for review is that the doctoral candidate demonstrates a solid understanding of the subject matter, freely analyzing and discussing its various aspects in both the literature review and the analysis of results. The author has presented a comprehensive literature review drawing on 93 sources- including 12 in Bulgarian, 45 in English, and numerous documents from the national regulatory framework. Notably, the majority of the sources date from the last ten years. The candidate conducts a detailed comparative analysis of European financing systems, examining budgetary, insurance-based, and private financing models in depth. A thorough SWOT analysis is performed for the Continental model (Germany, France, and the Netherlands) and the Scandinavian model (Sweden and Denmark), alongside a detailed overview of existing pricing methods: cost-based, market-oriented, and value-based. The study analyzes the roles of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) and private insurance companies, as well as various payment mechanisms for dental services- specifically fee-for-service, capitation, and the DRG model.

The author has clearly defined the problems and challenges associated with current practices in Bulgaria. The conclusions drawn from the literature review provide a sound rationale for the present study.

4. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation and the abstract:

The dissertation by Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova, titled "Models of Pricing and Payment for Outpatient Dental Care Services" constitutes an independent and timely scientific study addressing an issue of significance to health policy and practice: the establishment of economically sound, transparent, and sustainable mechanisms for pricing and remunerating dental services. The structure of the dissertation is logically organized and aligned with the defined research objective. It systematically examines theoretical foundations and existing financing and pricing models, the methodology of the author's own study, research findings from surveys of patients and dentists, challenges regarding dental care financing, and the development of an integrated system for effective pricing and economic remuneration. Specific attention is devoted to economic simulation, sensitivity analysis, and the potential for the digital integration of the proposed model. The material and methodology are underpinned by clearly

defined objectives and tasks. The development of the pricing and remuneration model is substantiated by survey data collected from both patients and dentists. A wide range of statistical methods has been employed to substantiate and visualize the results in accordance with the stated objectives. The results obtained allow the author to accept the formulated research hypotheses and to substantiate the need for changes to existing mechanisms. The dissertation's conclusion highlights that the parallel study conducted among patients and dentists identifies deficiencies regarding pricing transparency, the coverage of actual costs, and the existence of quality incentives, while simultaneously demonstrating support for the principles of the proposed model.

Evaluation of publications and participation in scientific forums related to the dissertation topic:

The doctoral candidate presents five publications on the topic, two of which are in journals with impact factor.

Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova meets the minimum scientometric requirements stipulated in the Regulations for Academic Development at the Medical University of Plovdiv.

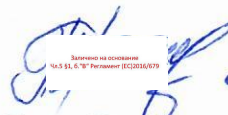
Some of the results from the dissertation have been presented and discussed before a wide audience of specialists at various scientific forums.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider the present dissertation work to be a meticulously executed, in-depth study of both theoretical and practical significance. It complies with all requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the Regulations for Academic Development at the Medical University of Plovdiv. In view of the above, I propose that the esteemed scientific jury award Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the doctoral program "Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy," professional field 7.1. Medicine.

Prepared by:

12 October 2026



Закрито на основание
№ 5/1, 6/9/ Промени (ICJ010/079)

Assoc. Prof. Petar Bozhinov, MD, PhD