

STATEMENT

By: Assoc. Prof. Tanya Pavlova Bozhkova, PhD

Department of Prosthetic Dentistry,
Faculty of Dental Medicine, Medical University – Plovdiv

Regarding: Dissertation for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.

Doctoral Program “Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy”

Professional field: 7.1 Medicine

Author: Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova

Form of doctoral studies: Full-time doctoral studies

Department: Department of Social Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv

Title: “Models for Pricing and Payment of Services in Outpatient Dental Care”

Scientific supervisors: Prof. Nina Musurlieva, PhD and Prof. Ralitsa Raycheva, PhD, Department of Social Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv

Grounds for submitting the statement: Participation as an internal member of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation thesis, according to Order No. P-5631/30.09.2026 of the Rector of the Medical University – Plovdiv.

1. General overview of the procedure and the doctoral student

The set of materials provided in paper and/or electronic format is in accordance with Art. 70 (1), Section I, concerning the acquisition of the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” and the Scientific Degree “Doctor of Sciences” at the Medical University – Plovdiv, under the Regulations of the Medical University – Plovdiv dated 28.01.2021.

The submitted materials provide the necessary basis for evaluating the dissertation, the research activity, and the results achieved by the doctoral student.

Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova graduated from the Faculty of Dental Medicine in Plovdiv in 1992. In 1996, she began working as a dentist at the District Dental Polyclinic in Karlovo and opened her own dental practice in Plovdiv in the same year. Following a successfully completed competition, she was appointed Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Medicine and Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv, on 01.04.2022. In 2025, she acquired a specialty in Public Dental Health.

2. Relevance of the topic

The topic of the dissertation is current and of unquestionable scientific and applied significance. Pricing and payment of dental activities are directly related to the sustainable functioning of dental practices, the quality of care provided, and patients’ access to dental services.

I particularly appreciate the fact that the author does not consider pricing solely as an economic process, but places it within a broader context that includes the actual costs of providing dental activities, clinical complexity, quality of service, professional motivation, and patients' expectations.

The main objective of the dissertation is to develop and empirically validate an innovative model for pricing and payment of dental activities in outpatient care that takes into account actual costs, quality characteristics of the services, and the expectations of dentists and patients, and that is applicable under Bulgarian conditions.

I consider the choice of topic timely and well justified, as it addresses issues of direct importance to dental professionals and patients, as well as to the organization of dental care in the country.

3. Knowledge of the problem

The dissertation demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the research problem. The literature review examines the characteristics and regulatory framework of outpatient dental care, the main economic models of healthcare financing, existing approaches to pricing dental services, and the role of public and private financing.

The doctoral student does not limit the review to a presentation of existing models, but analyzes them in the context of the Bulgarian system and the possibilities for applying international experience. This provides the necessary theoretical basis for the author's own study and for the subsequent development of the proposed pricing model.

The literature review and the subsequent discussion of the results demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret scientific information and to relate it to the stated research objectives.

4. Research methodology

The methodology is appropriate to the stated aim and provides the information necessary for the implementation of the six formulated research tasks.

A significant advantage is the parallel study of the opinions of the two main stakeholder groups – patients and dentists. The survey included 202 patients and 83 dentists from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, and Burgas. This made it possible to obtain data both on patients' perceptions of prices, transparency, and willingness to pay, and on dentists' assessments of the adequacy of remuneration, actual costs, quality, and the possibilities for introducing new pricing mechanisms.

Appropriate statistical methods were used for data processing, including descriptive, parametric and non-parametric methods, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. In addition, a retrospective analysis of the dynamics of health insurance payments and expenditures for dental care in Bulgaria for the period 2019–2025 was performed.

I consider the selected methodological approach appropriate to the nature of the study and capable of providing well-founded answers to the research tasks.

5. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and its contributions

The dissertation is logically structured and progresses consistently from the theoretical clarification of the problem to the author's own empirical studies and the development of an applied pricing model.

Of particular value is the combination of several analytical directions – a study of the attitudes of patients and dentists, an analysis of the dynamics of public financing of dental care during the period 2019–2025, and the development of a conceptual framework for integrated pricing and economic remuneration.

An important strength of the dissertation is that it does not remain solely at the level of identifying existing problems. Based on the theoretical analysis and the author's own results, a model is proposed that incorporates different cost components, work complexity, and quality indicators. The framework includes determination of clinical cost and base value, comparative analysis, sensitivity analysis, and assessment of the empirical validity of the model.

I accept the scientific and applied scientific contributions formulated by the author. Among them, I would emphasize the systematization and critical analysis of existing financing and pricing models, the empirical study of the attitudes of the main participants in the system, and the development of an integrated model aimed at more transparent and economically justified valuation of dental activities.

The results obtained have potential for practical application and may serve as a basis for further research and testing of the proposed approach in real dental practice.

6. Evaluation of the publications and the doctoral student's personal contribution

Five scientific publications and reports related to the topic of the dissertation have been presented. They address public financing of dental care, integrated pricing, inequalities in the provision of dental care, and the attitudes of patients and dentists.

The publication activity demonstrates consistent work on the dissertation topic and the presentation of part of the results to the scientific and professional community.

The submitted materials provide grounds to conclude that the doctoral student has made a substantial personal contribution to conducting the research, analyzing and interpreting the results, and developing the proposed model.

Critical remarks and recommendations: I have no substantial critical remarks that would call into question the scientific value of the dissertation or the reliability of the presented results. As a recommendation for future development, I would suggest testing the proposed model in a broader range of dental practices and for specific groups of dental activities. This would make it possible to assess its applicability in a real clinical and economic environment.

7. Abstract

The abstract is structured in accordance with the dissertation and presents, in a concise form, its main elements – aim, tasks and working hypotheses, materials and methods, results and discussion, conclusions, and contributions.

Its content reflects the main results and achievements of the dissertation research and provides a clear overview of its scope, methodology, and scientific and applied value.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and applied scientific results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations of the Medical University – Plovdiv. The submitted materials and dissertation results fully comply with the specific requirements adopted in connection with the Regulations of the Medical University – Plovdiv for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral student, Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova, possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge of the subject matter, skills in planning and conducting independent scientific research, statistical processing and interpretation of the obtained results, as well as the ability to formulate scientifically applied solutions, thereby demonstrating the qualities and skills required for independent scientific research.

In view of the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research and propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” to Dr. Ivelina Tenkova Popova-Sotirova in the Doctoral Program “Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy”, Professional Field 7.1 Medicine.

13.10.2026
Plovdiv

Signature:.....

(Assoc. Prof. Tanya

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