

STATEMENT

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The theme of the dissertation: "Organizational and managerial challenges for medical institutions in the conditions of pandemic of COVID-19 (on the example of Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven)"

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the current Law for the Development of Academic Staff, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Academy of Economics "D. A. Tsenov" – Svishtov.

I. General presentation of the dissertation thesis.

The dissertation is a theoretical and applied scientific research with a volume of 240 pages, in the development of which the classical structure has been followed and the achievement of balance between its individual parts and logical consistency between its constituent elements has been observed. In terms of composition and content, it includes a table of contents (2 pages), a list of abbreviations used (2 pages), an introduction (8 pages), a main text within three chapters (194 pages), and a conclusion (4 pages). There are a total of 93 graphical figures, including 24 tables and 69 figures. The thesis also includes 1 appendix of 19 pages.

The list of publications on the topic of the dissertation (1 page), contains 3 publications, including 1 article and 2 reports, through which the author has presented her research endeavors to the scientific community.

The chosen topic of the presented work is clearly distinguished by its dissertability, scientific significance, practical applicability, and social usefulness.

The study's relevance is determined by the issues related to the organizational and managerial challenges faced by healthcare institutions in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need for implementing new approaches to risk management in healthcare and healthcare organizations. In this regard, the search for the direct and indirect links between the development and implementation of a risk management program in the hospital and the performance of the same during the COVID-19 pandemic, including in terms of coping mechanisms for newly emerging risks, patient and staff safety, business continuity, positive financial performance, and many others, set the relevance and timeliness of this research study.

The object of the study is the private Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment “Heart and Brain” EAD - Pleven, as a part of the current national system of hospital medical care in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The subject of the study is the organizational and management challenges faced by the medical institutions in the country in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to implement a risk management program (on the example of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven).

The author has defined the following as **the main objective** of the thesis: “to demonstrate the need for a strong risk management program. Compliance with the steps of identification, monitoring, assessment, and prevention against the existing risks to the health care organization's operations, and strict implementation of the identified actions, could transform any threat to the health care organization into a positive and generate added value-for it”.

In order to achieve the main goal formulated in this way, the PhD student has defined the following tasks:

- outlining the key characteristics, place, and importance of the hospital in modern healthcare systems;

- presenting the concept of risk management of a hospital in the context of new projections of public health;
- justifying the application of risk management in the context of a COVID-19 pandemic;
- discussing the state of hospital medical care in the country;
- outlining the main challenges for hospital medical care in Bulgaria during a COVID-19 pandemic;
- analyzing the results of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- description of the key policy guidelines for COVID-19 risk management at Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven;
- outlining the steps to implement the Risk Management Program and the capabilities of Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- conducting a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the activities of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven.

In the course of the scientific work, the author states the following research thesis, namely “that the pandemic of COVID-19 provokes the management of hospital medical care facilities in our country in the direction - rethinking the strategies of the medical institutions and, in particular, the risk management programs underlying their risk management. The implementation of these programs is a key management tool and a practice-tested method of counteracting any healthcare organization (in this case - Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven) that is exposed to unprecedented risk pressure of similar pandemic proportions. Only the proactive and systematic implementation of risk management programs in the hospital could result positively in safeguarding the safety, life, and health of patients and staff, as well as the organization’s assets, market share, accreditation, reimbursement levels, brand value and reputation in society.”

The selected research methods used in the research process are as follows: a sociological method, in particular, the survey method; comparative method; documentary method; analysis and synthesis method; expert evaluation method; observation method; modeling method; statistical methods.

The author has also declared three specific limitations in the scope of the research in the development of this dissertation:

- the medical institutions in the Pleven region, taking into account the results of two of them - respectively the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven and the University Hospital “Dr. George Stransky” - Pleven, since they are considered leaders among the private and public hospitals for inpatient medical care in the region;
- the risk management programs in other hospitals, which use alternative methods of risk identification and assessment, have not been taken into account

and examined in order to compare them and possibly indicate which of them is producing better results;

- the respondents to the survey conducted to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on hospital operations were only from the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven, i.e. it was intended to investigate the attitudes and opinions of the staff, rather than a large-scale survey of the health staff of the hospital medical care facilities in the district or in the country, as could potentially be conducted.

In support of the ideas and theses presented by the author, 78 sources of scientific literature were used, of which 25 were in English and 53 in Bulgarian, formatted according to the requirements in a list, within 7 pages. The sources have been used correctly and the citation conforms to the accepted APA standard for Bibliographic Citation.

II. Assessment of the dissertation format and content.

The study is of sufficient length, with good research logic and a balanced structure. The style used is both scientific and comprehensible, and the scientific methods selected by the author are adequate to the defined object, subject, aim, and objectives precisely formulated. Emphasis is consistently placed on the derivation of the medical institution-risk management-pandemic of COVID-19 relation; the highlighting of organizational and managerial challenges faced by medical institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic; and the conducting of diagnostic analysis of the organization and management of the activities of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In **Chapter One, “The Hospital - Risk Management - COVID-19 Pandemic Relationship”**, the doctoral student interprets the characteristics, place, and importance of the hospital in contemporary health systems; the concept of hospital risk management in the context of new public health projections; and the application of risk management in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In **Chapter Two, “Organizational and Managerial Challenges Facing Hospital Medical Care in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic”**, the focus of the presentation reflects the results of the analysis of the current state of hospital medical care in Bulgaria and the challenges it faces in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic are also presented and analyzed.

In Chapter 3 “**Diagnostic analysis of the organization and management of the activity of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven in the period of the pandemic of COVID-19**”, the PhD student presents the results of the diagnostic analysis of the organization and management of the activity of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the conclusions reached from the implemented own “Program for managing risks and opportunities”.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, the PhD student summarizes the results and conclusions reached in the course of the research, systematizing them in scientific contributions of theoretical and theoretical-applied nature.

The abstract consists of 42 pages and correctly reflects the results achieved. At the same time, it contains all required elements and is developed according to generally accepted standards.

All the author's publications are actually on the topic of the dissertation and in fact represent parts of it, approbating some of the ideas formulated as contributions.

III. Scientific and applied contributions of the thesis.

The dissertation builds on the existing knowledge and enriches with new scientific ideas the theory and practice of health management, in particular Health Economics. Detailed acquaintance with the content of the dissertation allows to highlight the following merits, bearing the characteristic features of scientific and applied contributions:

1) scientific contributions

The generalizations and systematizations on the meaningful characteristics of the modern management of the medical institution and, more specifically, the risk management, and hence the detailed presentation of the algorithm and specifics of the preparation of a risk management plan in the healthcare organization/enterprise.

The study of the organizational and management challenges faced by healthcare institutions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the dependencies identified in this regard.

2) contributions of scientific and applied nature

Assessment of the development and status of Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a direct result of the adopted organizational behavior and hospital risk management policy by its management team.

In order to ascertain the effective implementation of the Risk and Opportunity Management Program, a survey instrument targeting the staff of the largest private medical institution in the territory of the Pleven region was piloted, with the elicitation of representative data from respondents using verbal-graphic models.

On the basis of the analysis of the results of the implementation of the “Risk and Opportunity Management Program” of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven, specific guidelines for future updating of the same are derived in order to ensure continuity of operations, prevent insolvency and bankruptcy of the organization, secure the expectations of shareholders-owners of the company, and all other stakeholders in society.

IV. Critical comments, questions, and recommendations on the thesis.

With regard to the substantive part of the thesis, I have no significant criticisms or recommendations.

My question to the doctoral candidate in connection with the defense of the dissertation is the following:

In the context of the information presented in Table 24 with the title “Identified risks, measures, responsible person and timeframe for implementation of the Risk and Opportunity Management Programme of the Multi profile hospital for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven” (pp. 150) and proceeding from the understanding that risk significance is assessed by grading the likelihood, exposure, and severity of harm that exists, justify your grading of the listed risks to the hospital's operations according to their economic and financial significance in the context of COVID-19.

V. Summary conclusion and opinion.

The dissertation submitted for review possesses the required characteristics of a complete, logically constructed, and completed scientific study with theoretical generalizations and scientific and applied contributions. The conclusions reached in the development are correctly presented and represent an original contribution of the doctoral candidate to science.

On this basis, I give a positive evaluation to the dissertation work entitled “Organizational and managerial challenges for medical institutions in the conditions of pandemic of COVID-19 (on the example of Multi profile hospital

for active treatment „Heart and Brain“ EAD – Pleven)” and I propose the members of the Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (in Economics) to Lyuba Martinova Miteva in the doctoral program “Finance, money circulation, credit and insurance (Insurance and Social Security)”.

Veliko Tarnovo, 28.06.2023

Author of the statement:.....

(Assoc. Prof. Ivan Grozdanov, PhD)

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