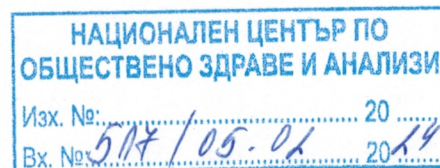


REVIEW



by Prof. Elena Mladenova Shipkovenska, MD, PhD

**on a dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific
degree "doctor"**

Professional direction: 7.1 Medicine

Author: Mirela Rumenova Strandjeva

Form of doctoral studies: Independent preparation

Research supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Galya Tsoleva, MD, PhD

1. General introduction to the procedure

According to Order RD 22 / 15.01.2024 of the Director of the National Center for Public Health and Analysis, I have been appointed as an external member of the Scientific Jury for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Health and psychosocial harms of the use of alcohol by other persons on the young people in Bulgaria" for obtaining the scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education: 7. Health care and sports; Professional direction: 7.1. Medicine; Scientific specialty: "Social medicine and health management", with candidate Mirela Rumenova Strandjeva, doctoral student of independent training at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis.

The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents for the competition as provided for in the Academic Staff Development Act and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis.

2. Career development of the candidate

Mirela Strandjeva was born in 1986. In 2008, she graduated from the American International University in London with a Bachelor's degree in psychology, and in 2009 he received a master's degree in "Health Psychology" at the same university.

Her practical experience began in 2007 with an internship position - assistant in a neurology office at "St. George" University Hospital, Plovdiv. In the same year, she was also an intern-assistant at the Institute of Psychology of the Ministry of the Interior.

From 2010 to 2013, he worked as a human resource management consultant at Astrea Human Resources. Since February 2014, he has held the position of "Expert" at the National Center for Public Health and Analysis, Sofia, and since the beginning of 2016, he has been the "Chief Expert".

Since 2023, she has been appointed Head of the "Prevention of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases" Department, Directorate of "Health Promotion and Disease Prevention".

She is a member of teams for projects under the European Union program for actions in the field of health (Global Health Initiative, Cancer and other NCDs prevention – action on health determinants). Member of research teams for WHO projects (Global Youth Tobacco Survey, Evidence into Action Alcohol Project); Member of working groups at the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Science. It is a member of expert networks - EurohealthNet Network, International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI), Monitoring Framework of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All (SDG3 GAP).

3. Evaluation of the dissertation work

Actuality and structure of work

Alcoholism is one of the serious and current health problems in the world due to:

1. Its wide distribution;
2. The coverage of increasingly younger age groups, especially characteristic of our country;
3. The infliction of cumulative harm that affects the consuming person, the people around him and society as a whole;
4. The difficulties in controlling alcoholism with various health strategies and tactics.

The stated reasons give rise to a number of questions regarding: the health risk and consequences of the effects of alcohol; harm caused by the use of alcohol to other persons; ways to control excessive alcohol consumption; health and psycho-social cost paid by society.

Mirela Stranzheva is looking for an answer to some of these current questions in her work. In this sense, the developed dissertation work is not only relevant, but also necessary for the Bulgarian reality.

The presented dissertation work is built in an adequate, logical structure. After a

staged introduction on 187 pages, with 44 tables, 30 figures and 2 appendices, in 5 chapters the current state of the problem is examined according to literature data, purpose, tasks and methodological approaches, analysis and discussion of the results, conclusions, guidelines.

The bibliography includes 79 literary sources.

Characteristics of the literature review

The literature review analyzed the prevalence of alcohol use among the population in our country and in the European region. The harms of alcohol use to the individual, represented by the number of deaths or years of good health life lost due to early morbidity, disability and premature death in terms of DALYs, were assessed. The health risks associated with the abuse of alcohol are indicated, as well as the types of harm that alcohol causes to other people / children, family, colleagues, society/.

The rich and multifaceted literature review testifies to a great and deep awareness of the dissertation about the influence of alcohol on public health. The literature review itself, with its critical analysis of the problem, summaries and conclusions, contains a certain independent scientific contribution. The competence of M. Stranzheva on the problem gives her the opportunity to determine the directions of her own research and to formulate the purpose and tasks of the dissertation work.

Evaluation of the goal, tasks and methodical approach

The purpose of the study is well stated: "To investigate the prevalence of health and psychosocial harms of alcohol consumption by others among the young population, with a view to developing guidelines for the prevention of alcohol use." 5 tasks, 1 thesis and 3 hypotheses related to it are specified.

In 2020, a National study was conducted to clarify the risk factors for the health of the Bulgarian population and partial data from it was used. 3182 persons of both sexes /representative sample of the population/, divided into six age groups, were covered.

The second study was conducted among students in the country in order to assess the harm of alcohol use on other individuals. A web-based questionnaire was used, including adapted sections from the validated questionnaire from the WHO/Thai Health Project Protocol "The Harm to Others from Drinking", Version 1. A methodological tool was validated for the study of the harm of alcohol use on other persons. The sample was formed randomly by completing a questionnaire sent by e-mail to the students. 405 students participated in the anonymous survey.

The methodology is of a complex nature, including sociological (survey, interview and documentary) and statistical methods. I highly appreciate the author's ability to apply appropriate modern statistical methods for processing the data from the conducted studies: Descriptive statistics - frequency analysis and graphic images; Method chi-square (Chi-square test); Method of Mann-Whitney (Mann-Witney); t-test for independence; Ordinal logistic regression analysis; Multinomial logistic regression analysis.

Main results

The results provide reasoned **new knowledge** about the trends related to alcohol consumption of one of the most affected populations by alcohol - our country and the approaches in the implementation of different policies to limit the use of alcohol. The social harm and negative consequences associated with harm to the well-being and health of people around alcohol users are analyzed. 22 damages were identified, divided into three groups. The first combines 6 damages caused by aggression, violence and illegal behavior caused by a known or unknown person who has consumed alcohol. The second covers six additional harms from close people in the respondent's environment, representing possible consequences in the sphere of social relationships. The third group contains 10 harms caused by a close person. They complement the influence of social relationships and have a direct effect on the psychological state of the interviewee.

The study is an important step towards determining the prevalence of different types of harm among students. The object of study was purposefully selected, since the group of students is defined as one of the most affected by alcohol in Bulgaria. The results of the study allow identification of the defining characteristics when perceiving the effect of alcohol. These are gender, marital status and religious affiliation. Men were found to be more likely than women to report harm from aggressive, violent and abusive behavior caused by a known or unknown person who had consumed alcohol than women. Harm was noted by almost twice as many women when the perpetrator was a stranger/distant acquaintance, and by two and a half times as many men when it was a friend or close acquaintance.

The evidence is undisputed that drinking 5-6 days a week interacts with the most harms: offending, problems with friend(s)/neighbor(s), family problems/partnership difficulties, emotional hurt/neglect.

The impressive volume of collected empirical material from the two studies guarantees high reliability of the results and validity of the conclusions drawn. **The conclusions**

correspond to the results obtained, which shows that the set tasks have been fulfilled and the goal has been achieved.

Dissertation Contributions

- Mirela Stranzheva's work has a markedly innovative character in its staging. This is the first study in Bulgaria to investigate the harm of alcohol use on other persons.
- An analytical overview of the current foreign and Bulgarian scientific literature on the spread of alcohol use and the risks of its consumption among the population in the country and the world was made. The harms associated with the environment of alcohol consumers are indicated, and new perspectives in scientific research in this direction are explored.
- Standardized documents from the WHO/Thai Health Project "The Harm to Others from Drinking" Protocol, officially approved in scientific practice, were used for the first time in our country, which allows comparison of the obtained results with the data of international studies.
- An important contribution of the development is the performed analysis and assessment not only of the frequency, but also of the severity of the harm caused by the use of alcohol on other persons, based on the developed statistical models.
- Based on her own research, the author offers guidelines for the prevention of alcohol use, with the main goal of providing an opportunity to predict the adverse consequences for the individual and society.

The abstract for the dissertation correctly reflects the structure of the dissertation and contains the most important results of the research.

In connection with the dissertation work, 5 scientific publications were printed.


Personal impressions I have no personal impressions of Mirela Stranzheva, nor participation in joint projects and publications.

CONCLUSION

The topic is undoubtedly extremely relevant, with scientific and practical value. The development is the personal work of the doctoral student and is distinguished by good faith. Results are evidence-based. Mirela Strandjeva shows in-depth knowledge and capabilities for organizing research, systematizing and making sense of the obtained scientific results.

Everything stated in the review gives me the reason to vote "positively" and recommend to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to also vote positively for awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Mirela Strandjeva in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management".

Reviewer:



03/02/2024

Prof. Elena Shipkovenska, MD, PhD