

OPINION

From Prof. Dr. Hristo Kozhuharov, PhD

Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, Medical University of Varna

In reference with: Dissertation thesis for award of a scientific and educational degree PhD in Medical Psychology, Clinical Psychology.

Topic of the dissertation thesis: „Locus of control, coping mechanisms and quality of life in patients with bladder cancer”

Doctoral Candidate: Anita Milusheva

Doctoral supervisor:

Prof. Vanya Matanova, PhD

Doctoral advisor:

Prof. Krasimir Neykov, PhD

The opinion on the materials, submitted by the doctoral candidate for participation in the procedure, is in accordance with the Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the requirements of the Rules on the conditions and order for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic ranks at SU „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

Actuality of the topic

The topic of the dissertation is dedicated to an especially important issue – the quality of life in patients with bladder cancer. Bladder cancer is the fourth most common malignancy in men and tenth in women, making a total of 5-10 % of all malignancies. The highest incidence of bladder cancer is among men in the age between 60 and 65 years, but in the past years there has been a shift towards affecting younger patients. According to the Bulgarian National Cancer Registry, for the past three years the cases of bladder cancer are progressively increasing as well as the newly diagnosed patients. Epidemiologic research is conclusive on the need of new approaches towards the problem. Nevertheless, bladder carcinoma has a progressive course and is negatively affecting one's normal functioning, including the physical, psychological, social and

economic well-being of the patients. The efficacy of the treatment, like in every other disease, is in correlation with the adherence to diagnostic and therapeutic plan and the motivation of the patient himself, which on the other hand depend on the functional abilities of the patient to adjust to new surroundings. The doctoral candidate poses the question whether there is a correlation between the quality of life in patients with bladder cancer and the personality predisposition – locus of control and coping mechanisms; and investigates further whether a disturbance in coping strategies is present. The conclusion of her work has the ambitious goal of contribute to improvement of quality of life in those patients, despite the disease.

Characteristics of dissertation thesis

The presented dissertation thesis has a total volume of 201 pages, comprising an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contribution, bibliography and enclosure. The results are presented in 4 tables, 6 figures and 41 graphs. Out of 311 footnotes, 117 are in Cyrillic and 188 in Latin script, altogether with 6 web pages. More than 60% of the used literature is published in the last 10 years.

The presented dissertation summary is well-structured and follows the most important parts of the work, thus being in accordance with the Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules on application of the LDASRB.

The literature review is well-organized and systemized, containing a total of 6 figures and 1 table. The literature review shows a well knowledge of the topic in combination with doctoral candidate's ability to analyze the collected data and to discuss unanswered and controversial topics, which is to show the actuality of the discussed issues and the need of improving the algorithm of the therapeutic process. The literature review is based on contemporary sources on the topic of the thesis. In the **first chapter** are presented the theoretical concepts of locus of control, coping mechanism and quality of life, as well as psychosomatics and psycho-oncology. It is well-structured and reveals in depth the development of the ideas behind the constructs that are of interest in the work. **Second chapter** is of particular interest as it contains a theoretical analysis and characteristics of the localization of the malignancy. Despite her lack of medical degree, the doctoral candidate presents thoroughly the disease in its whole – symptoms, grading, diagnostics and latest therapeutic approaches. **Third chapter** is divided into six sections and presents the methodology of the empirical investigation. The aims, subject and objectives of the study are formulated in a clear manner and are in accordance with the research statement.

The methodology, organization of the research process and the subject selection process are well reasoned. The selected methodology is appropriate regarding the aims and the objectives of the study and implements the use of widely used and validated tools. No statistical methods used in the work have been described. **Chapter four** contains the analysis of the results obtained by the empirical research. It is presented by seven sections and is approximately 1/5 of the whole volume of the work. The results are explained in details and visualized in a comprehensive way. The discussion of the results shows a detailed comparison between local and international data, as well as interpretation of the own findings with an accent on the defined problems. The analysis is well-structured and follows the steps set by the objectives and statements of the dissertation.

Conclusions and contributions

The presented dissertation thesis is an original work based on the findings of own research. The main conclusions are formulated in details and deductible by the results. The doctoral candidate defines four theoretical and 3 practical contributions of her work. I agree with the conclusions and deem the following as most valuable contributions:

1. It has been proved that the quality of life is in correlation and influenced by the coping mechanism, which gives direction towards development of programs for rehabilitation regarding the maladaptive coping mechanism in patients;

2. The results will be in use of further development of programs for rehabilitation and management of the stress and distress after the initial diagnosis of malignancy and along the antineoplastic therapy.

The doctoral candidate gives direction of the psychotherapy in patients with bladder cancer and development of programs which aim to improve the quality of life, without further discussing the limitations in her work.

I recommend the results to be presented before the national oncological community of specialists.

Conclusion: I consider that the presented dissertation thesis on “Locus of control, coping mechanism and quality of life in patients with bladder cancer” is in accordance with the LDASRB and give my positive evaluation. I propose to the honorable jury to award the educational and scientific degree “Philosophy doctor” in Medical Psychology Anita Milusheva.

23.02.2020

Varna

Opinion drawn by:

Prof. Dr. Hristo Kozuharov, PhD