

OPINION

by

Prof. Dr. Jana Stoyanova Kazandjieva, MD, PhD

Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda

on the dissertation thesis entitled

“Etiopathogenetic Factors in Nummular Eczema”

for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

Professional field 7.1 Medicine

Doctoral Program 03.01.21 “Dermatology and Venereology”

Author of the dissertation thesis: Dr. Martina Todorova Yaneva

Form of doctoral studies: external PhD student, independent training

Clinic: “Dermatology and Venereology”, Tokuda University Hospital – Sofia

Topic: “Etiopathogenetic Factors in Nummular Eczema”

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Razvigor Borislavov Darlenski, MD, DSc

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the PhD Candidate

The submitted set of materials in both printed and electronic form complies with the regulations and procedures for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” at Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda and includes all required documents.

2. Relevance of the Topic

The dissertation thesis entitled “Etiopathogenetic Factors in Nummular Eczema” addresses a relatively little-known area of dermato-allergology. Nummular eczema (nummular dermatitis) remains, as of 2026, a chronic condition accompanied by severe pruritus and characterized by coin-shaped plaques. Despite the many identified potential triggering factors, the etiology of this condition has not been fully clarified, and in the Republic of Bulgaria there is a complete

lack of studies on this issue. Although nummular eczema typically follows a benign clinical course, it may negatively affect patients' quality of life proportionally to the severity of the condition.

3. Knowledge of the Problem

The dissertation consists of 160 pages and is illustrated with 60 figures, 35 tables, and 3 appendices. The bibliography includes 184 literary sources, of which 20 are by Bulgarian authors published in Bulgarian journals and 4 are publications by Bulgarian authors in international editions.

The aim of the dissertation is formulated clearly and precisely and essentially repeats the title of the dissertation thesis. The five stated objectives are specific and capable of leading to the achievement of the aim.

4. Research Methodology

Appropriate scientific research and statistical methods have been used in accordance with the aim of the dissertation thesis (clinical-epidemiological study, nummular eczema assessment scale, patch testing, intradermal testing, and statistical methods). The research methodology allows achievement of the stated aim and obtaining adequate answers to the objectives set in the dissertation thesis.

5. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation Thesis and Its Contributions

The thesis is structured according to the requirements and contains an introduction, list of symbols, literature review, aim and objectives, materials and methods, results, discussion, conclusions, contributions, and bibliography. Five scientific publications by the doctoral candidate on the topic of "nummular eczema" are presented.

The literature review is written within 19 pages and covers all aspects of nummular eczema – from etiopathogenesis to treatment.

In the "Materials and Methods" section, the patients are described in detail – 184 patients, including 84 with nummular eczema and 100 controls. The research methods (epidemiological analysis, severity assessment scale – Nummular Eczema Severity Index [NESI], assessment of

pruritus severity, sleep disturbances, skin dryness, quality of life assessment, patch testing, intradermal testing, and statistical analysis) enable achievement of the stated aim and adequate answers to the objectives. This is the first large-scale study of nummular eczema conducted in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The results reflect the conducted investigations and are well presented with the corresponding tables and diagrams. The results are organized according to the five stated objectives. A pilot study was performed in five patients with nummular eczema using intradermal testing to investigate the relationship with bacterial provocation of eczematous lesions.

The discussion is detailed and addresses numerous etiopathogenetic factors: absence of clear sex- and age-related determination, the chronic profile of nummular eczema, and significantly longer symptom duration in men (143.6 days versus 57.1 days in women). It was found that lesion localization correlates with disease severity, with patients presenting more limited forms of nummular eczema showing predominant involvement of the lower extremities. A Koebner phenomenon was identified in 22% of the patients included in the present dissertation.

Considering the current trends toward regarding nummular eczema as a separate phenotype of atopic dermatitis, the results of this scientific work are clearly two-sided. On the one hand, the doctoral candidate did not find differences in disease duration and/or the presence of disseminated forms of nummular eczema in cases with personal or family history of atopy, nor a relationship between atopy and involvement of hair and nails, infections, or the Koebner phenomenon. On the other hand, as expected, the presence of atopy was associated with a higher frequency of relapses and accompanying allergies. Furthermore, in cases with personal history of atopy, predominant involvement of the lower extremities was established, whereas family history of atopy was associated predominantly with upper extremity involvement.

It was established that the mean DLQI score in patients with nummular eczema was 8.87, corresponding to the category “moderate effect on life.” Naturally, pruritus proved to be the central symptom with the greatest impact on sleep disturbances, eczema severity index (NESI), and quality of life.

Ten conclusions were drawn based on the study results. The conclusions correspond to the objectives set in the dissertation thesis. For the first time in Bulgaria, an analysis of etiopathogenetic factors in nummular eczema has been conducted.

There are 10 contributions, of which 5 are of scientific-theoretical and 6 of scientific-practical nature.

I do not identify any elements of plagiarism and consider the presented data original and interesting.

Critical remarks:

The discussion is well developed; however, it lacks structuring according to the main objectives set in the dissertation thesis.

6. Assessment of Scientometric Criteria

The doctoral candidate presents five publications, four of which are in Bulgarian scientific journals, while one has been published in EMJ Reviews. In all publications, Dr. Martina Yaneva is the first author.

Dr. Yaneva has participated with posters and case presentations related to the dissertation topic in three international conferences and congresses abroad, as well as four conferences and congresses in Bulgaria.

Dr. Martina Todorova Yaneva fully satisfies the required scientometric criteria of Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda according to the regulations for academic staff development at Acibadem City Clinic UMHAT Tokuda for acquiring the scientific degree “Doctor.”

7. Abstract

The abstract contains 52 pages and includes, in concise form, the main sections of the dissertation thesis. The content of the abstract reflects the principal results achieved in the dissertation.

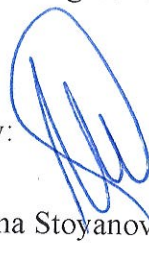
8. Conclusion

The dissertation thesis entitled “Etiopathogenetic Factors in Nummular Eczema” by Dr. Martina Yaneva contains scientific-theoretical and scientific-practical results that represent an original contribution and meet all requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor.”

I confidently give my positive evaluation of the conducted research presented in the above-reviewed dissertation thesis, abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury that the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” be awarded to Dr. Martina Todorova Yaneva.

11 May 2026

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and strokes, positioned above the printed name.

Prof. Dr. Jana Stoyanova Kazandjieva, MD, PhD