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**Review of a doctoral dissertation of Katarzyna Małgorzata Lion**

entitled

**Assessment of experienced stigmatisation among people living with dementia in Poland, Italy and the United Kingdom**  
(Ocena zjawiska stygmatyzacji wśród osób z otępieniem w Polsce, Wielkiej Brytanii i we Włoszech)

prepared under supervision of prof. dr hab. Joanna Rymaszewska (Supervisor) and dr n. med. Dorota Szcześniak (Associate Supervisor) in the Department of Psychiatry, Wrocław Medical University.

This review was prepared based on the formal request from prof. dr hab. Grzegorz Mazur – Chairman of the Board for Medical Science Discipline – dated December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 (DK-40000-49/2017) based on the Board for Medical Science Discipline Law no 20/XI/2019 from November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Increasing number of people diagnosed with neurodegenerative diseases and aging society are main reasons for the raising number of people diagnosed with dementia among older people worldwide. It is estimated that there 7.7 million of new dementia diagnosis each year. Despite the great dementia and mild cognitive impairment prevalence as well as broad discussion about prevention and treatment of dementia around the world, there are still only a little scientific information regarding stigmatisation of people with dementia, their informal carers and families. Especially, those living in Poland.

PhD candidate - Katarzyna M Lion – in her doctoral thesis decided to evaluate the experience of stigmatisation among people with dementia not only in Poland, but also in Italy and the UK. In the holistic model of treatment and care of people with dementia there should be a place and time for discussion and support programs to minimise this phenomenon. Therefore, the reviewed doctoral thesis covers an original and current research problem.

Doctoral candidate, allowed by Law on Academic Degrees and Title dated on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (with later changes), prepared her PhD dissertation with three thematically consistent scientific publications. Two of them were published in highly ranked scientific journal (IF=2.956), indexed in all main databases which increases the value of this scientific achievement.

Reviewed doctoral dissertation entitled **Assessment of experienced stigmatisation among people living with dementia in Poland, Italy and the United Kingdom** consisted of three published papers:

1. **Katarzyna Urbańska**, Dorota Szcześniak, Joanna Rymaszewska. The stigma of dementia. *Advances in Psychiatry and Neurology*. 2015; 24(4):225-230. DOI: 10.1016/j.pin.2015.10.001
2. **Katarzyna Małgorzata Lion**, Dorota Szcześniak, Katarzyna Bulińska, Justyna Mazurek, Shirley B. Evans, Simon C. Evans, Francesca Lea Saibene, Alessia d'Arma, Claudia Scorolli, Elisabetta Farina, Dawn Brooker, Rabih Chattat, Franka J. M. Meiland, Rose-Marie Dröes & Joanna Rymaszewska. Does the Meeting Centre Support Programme decrease the experience of stigmatisation among people with cognitive deficits? *Aging & Mental Health*. 2019. DOI: 10.1080/13607863.2019.1683815
3. **Katarzyna Małgorzata Lion**, Dorota Szcześniak, Katarzyna Bulińska, Shirley Barbara Evans, Simon C. Evans, Francesca Lea Saibene, Alessia d'Arma, Elisabetta Farina, Dawn June Brooker, Rabih Chattat, Franka J. M. Meiland, Rose-Marie Dröes & Joanna Rymaszewska. Do people with dementia and mild cognitive impairments experience stigma? A cross-cultural investigation between Italy, Poland and the UK. *Aging & Mental Health*. 2019. DOI: 10.1080/13607863.2019.1577799

All publications were attached to the PhD thesis manuscript. Total Impact Factor of presented scientific achievement is 5.192 and total of MNiSW score was 63.00. The first article is a review paper, two other publications present original research study. PhD candidate is listed as a first author of all presented papers. She was a leading author in these papers responsible for designing the study, analysing available literature and scientific data, analysing results, drafting and preparing the final versions of manuscripts. Additionally, doctoral Candidate was listed as a corresponding author for all presented articles, which is usually not an easy role.

The PhD dissertation was prepared according to the rules for this type of a scientific achievement, and presented on 55 pages of the presented printed version. It starts with abstracts in both, English and Polish, languages followed by short introduction before the first published paper. This publication is a careful review of the existing literature and creates a theoretical background to the planned research. It therefore proves the increased level of stigmatisation among people living with dementia and their families, as well as a lack of discussion and only a little research data available, especially regarding people living in Poland. It demonstrates that Doctoral Candidate recognised the scientific problem very well and the research topic is currently of a great importance.

In the following chapters PhD Candidate clearly and precisely presented aim and objectives of her work, which were realised in the next scientific publications. She also included materials and methods chapter. After presenting two original papers she briefly summarised obtained results, which allowed her to create conclusions in Chapter VIII.

The highlighted need for further research in this area is one of the most important conclusions. They also prove that stigmatisation is a complex problem and there is a diversity of country-specific mechanisms related to it. They also indicate a necessity for looking for support forms for people with dementia and their families to minimise the effect of stigmatisation. Obtained results are of a great value, covering theoretical and practical aspects of this phenomenon.

Additionally, PhD thesis contains co-authors declarations, short biography of Doctoral Candidate and her scientific achievements in form of published manuscripts and conference papers.

It is important to highlight that in two original papers, the thesis' author carried out broad and complex discussion, along with obtained results and existing literature. She also included *study limitations* sections in her both scientific papers which proves her consciousness and maturity in conducting research.

All three articles presented in the doctoral thesis had been already reviewed by at least two external reviewers invited by the journals' editorial boards before acceptance for publishing. However, as a reviewer of this PhD dissertation I would like to raise a few issues hoping that Doctoral Candidate would refer to them during the public PhD thesis viva.

1. In both original papers there are some missing details about the recruitment process. Especially, in the first article as well as details about participants who were not enrolled in the Meeting Centre activities (2<sup>nd</sup> article).
2. How long do people qualified to the study, described in the second study, did participate in the Meeting Centres activities? Were they just starting participation, at the baseline timepoint measure?
3. When did participants with dementia were diagnosed with their condition (duration of dementia)?
4. Were some of the recruited people diagnosed with other medical conditions or disabilities, e.g. functional? What was their functional status?
5. Did people enrolled into the study use other form of support before participating in the study?
6. What was a statistical test used to assess the normality of distribution?
7. Little number of people enrolled in the second article.

Presented suggestions and questions do not decrease the quality of the presented PhD thesis. I value the presented PhD dissertation highly positively.

Summarising, I conclude that PhD thesis of Katarzyna Małgorzata Lion covers original and current scientific problem regarding stigmatisation phenomenon among people living with dementia. Moreover, the obtained results complete the existing state of knowledge in this area. Presented PhD dissertation proves that Doctoral Candidate is a mature researcher presenting broad theoretical knowledge and research skills, including those needed to successfully work in the international research team.

Therefore, I propose to admit Katarzyna Małgorzata Lion to further stages of the doctoral procedure.

dr hab. Joanna Kowalska, prof.AWF

