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Department 2: Epidemiology and Health Monitoring, Unit 24: Health Reporting

REVIEW by the foreign scientific advisor Dr Alexander Rommel

Dissertation thesis of Ph.D. candidate Fatima Dautovna Kassymbekova on the topic "Communication Strategy of the Human Papillomavirus Vaccination Program in the Republic of Kazakhstan," submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in the specialty 8D10101 - "Public Health."

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The doctoral research of Fatima Dautovna Kassymbekova, presented as a series of publications, focused on developing effective communication strategies to enhance the implementation of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination program in the Republic of Kazakhstan. This work addresses critical public health challenges, including increasing HPV vaccination coverage and preventing cervical cancer, which remain highly relevant for Kazakhstan and beyond.

As part of her research, the author conducted the first-ever calculation of DALY (Disability-Adjusted Life Years) for cervical cancer in Kazakhstan that was based on national data. This included the components YLL (Years of Life Lost) and YLD (Years Lived with Disability). These findings provide a quantitative assessment of the disease burden, offering a solid foundation for prioritizing preventive strategies and optimizing resource allocation in the healthcare system. The results were published in high-ranking international journals, demonstrating the academic rigor and impact of the work. The research also includes a systematic analysis of barriers to HPV vaccination, particularly in rural areas, and synthesizes strategies to address these challenges. These findings contribute practical recommendations that are applicable not only in Kazakhstan but also in other contexts with similar challenges. A notable aspect of the doctoral work is the assessment of the knowledge of health professionals regarding HPV and HPV vaccination. The author developed and validated a questionnaire that identified gaps in knowledge and informs targeted educational strategies. This, along with associated findings, has been accepted in peer-reviewed journals, further underscoring its relevance and utility.

Fatima Kassymbekova also completed a research stay at the Robert Koch Institute (Germany) in 2022, where she enhanced her expertise in burden of disease methodologies. During this time, she demonstrated exceptional independence, diligence, and professionalism, qualities that are evident in the robust and well-structured series of publications that constitute her doctoral work.

Throughout her doctoral studies, Fatima Kassymbekova authored 12 scientific articles, four of which indexed in high-impact journals in Web of Science and Scopus, directly related to the topic of her research. She actively disseminated her findings through presentations at international and national conferences, showcasing her commitment to advance public health science.

The series of publications presented by Kassymbekova Fatima is distinguished by its scientific novelty, methodological rigor, and practical relevance. This body of work significantly contributes to the field of public health, particularly in the prevention of oncological diseases, and sets a strong foundation for the further development of vaccination strategies in Kazakhstan.

Considering the quality and relevance of her research, I recommend accepting Fatima Dautovna Kassymbekova's doctoral work, presented in the form of a series of publications, for defense in the specialty 8D-10101 "Public Health".

Scientific Advisor

Team leader of Robert Koch Institute

Dr Alexander Rommel