

**"CAROL DAVILA" UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY,  
BUCHAREST  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL  
DENTAL MEDICINE DOMAIN**

**PARADIGMS IN DENTISTRY IN TERMS OF ORAL  
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY DENTISTRY**

**SYNOPSIS OF THE HABILITATION THESIS**

**CANDIDATE:**

**Ionela Ruxandra SFEATCU  
Associate Professor,  
"Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest**

**2023**

## SYNOPSIS

The habilitation thesis entitled: “**Paradigms in dentistry in terms of oral health and community dentistry**” presents my entire scientific, academic and professional activity, but also future directions of academic career development. It is structured into four main chapters and it presents my evolution after earning the highest academic degree, that of Doctor of Dental Medicine in 2009.

**Chapter 1** presents the evolution of my scientific concerns in various stages. The research activity carried out from the beginning of my academic career until now has mainly focused on the field of Community Dentistry and Oral Health; in terms of my academic career, my studies published in recent years have had a multidisciplinary nature, which is in fact an essential aspect in the quality of the medical and research activity. The *Ph.D. thesis* entitled “*The role played by the general physician and the dentist in the detection of oral cancer in its early stages*” addressed an important public health issue and a field of interdisciplinary interest. The aim of the thesis was to objective the involvement of family medicine and dental medicine in the primary and secondary prevention of oral cancer and to propose practical methods and measures for clinicians and population, given that, in few cases oral cancer is early detected and that patients present late for consultation and treatment. Along with screening, clinicians should be involved in the education process. The general physician does not have a dental chair and proper light illumination, but must know the oral anatomy, the appearance of typical formations, and variants of normal, and must detect any changes and reffer promptly the patient to the specialist, facilitating the early diagnosis and initiation of adequate specialized treatment. The careful medical history and oral clinical examination, carefully and responsibly made, lead to the patient's framing in the high-risk groups, are important early diagnosis methods for oral mucosal cancer, an extremely important objective, given the major impact of malignant pathology on patients' quality of life. It is required to increase the level of knowledge and concerns of both, the population and the specialists, dentists and general physicians, as well as to improve the compliance and addressability of patients for periodic medical and dental checkups, especially for high-risk groups.

Moreover, the data and the outcomes of the thesis were capitalized through their presentation in oral communication and posters sessions, being also published in indexed journals.

In the following years, I was involved in *research projects* in the endeavor to find new means of education and oral health promotion activities, together with clinical examinations, in order to establish the oral health profiles of different communities, including the disadvantaged ones. The main results were presented during the congresses in Romania and abroad and were subsequently published.

The year 2020 was marked by the global spread of SARS-COV-2 virus, highly contagious and with great risks for overall health, reasons why World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic in March. Since then, efforts have been made by researchers to identify the possible means of control this disease. During that quarantine the restrictions forced individuals to change their routine, and a part of these impacted also, indirectly, oral health-related behaviours: educational activity in schools and universities was temporary interrupted, in most fields of work employers switched to working from home or stopped working, individuals were allowed to leave their houses only for certain essential reasons and on strict schedule, limiting the access to oral health care services for dental emergencies only. Therefore I was concerned about oral health-related behavioural changes during COVID-19 lockdown in our country and together with my colleagues assessed the differences in oral hygiene routine as well as smoking and eating habits among two groups of adults: medical/dental and non-medical/dental group. The results showed the oral hygiene routine has modified, and changes observed were favourable among participants with a medical/dental professional background and not for general population. To the best of my knowledge, at date the paper was written, there were not other similar studies on adults in other population. In the same pandemic context, another published study together with the reserch team validated the Multidimensional Vaccine Hesitancy Scale in the case of a sample of Romanian adults, being the first attempt to assess the psychometric properties of this tool in a different culture from the one in which it was originally developed.

As a result of the research program in which I was the project manager, I published a study in an indexed ISI journal in which the first literacy assessment tool in dental medicine (REALD-30) was validated in the Romanian language. This study aimed to translate and adapt the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Dentistry (RREALD-30) instrument for Romanian urban adults. To our knowledge, this is the first study to introduce and evaluate the psychometric properties of an oral health literacy tool for the Romanian population. The RREALD-30 demonstrated excellent internal consistency and reliability in repeated administrations.

Another study I want to mention is the first to assess the psychometrical properties of the Oral Health Values Scale (OHVS) which measures the extent to which individuals invest in their oral health, in a cultural model other than the one in which it was developed. The OHVS is a tool built in 2021 in the case of the sample of American subjects, whose aim is to assess the values of one's oral health. The focus is on how much attention an individual pays to personal and professional oral health care. OHVS is the first instrument that deals with the evaluation of the values related to oral health. The study results provide evidence in favor of the cross-cultural validity of the scale. The practical implications are likely to lead to knowledge of oral health values in order to promote the importance of oral health education.

Also in Chapter 1, I presented the books to whose publication I contributed as first author or coauthor, but also the grants or the dental studies in which I took part in as an investigator.

In **Chapters 2 and 3** of the Habilitation thesis, I presented my academic and professional development, as it took place throughout the 23 years since graduation from the dental school.

In **Chapter 4**, I presented the main directions of development in the field of dental research and in terms of oral health education, health promotion and community field. For all these, I will attempt to include some young dental students in my team, with a solid preparation for this type of activity and those with notable results will be able to present them in the scientific field.

The team and the interdisciplinary collaboration will be the key points of achieving the objectives of all projects.