

	<p align="center">«С.Ж. АСФЕНДИЯРОВ АТЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ ҰЛТТЫҚ МЕДИЦИНА УНИВЕРСИТЕТІ» КЕАҚ НАО «КАЗАХСКИЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ МЕДИЦИНСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ИМ. С.Д.АСФЕНДИЯРОВА» JSC «Kazakh National Medical University named after S.D. Asfendiyarov»</p>	
	<p align="center">Department of Epidemiology</p>	<p align="center">Review of doctoral dissertation</p>

**Review of the doctoral dissertation of Balnur Iskakova on the topic
 “Measuring HIV-related stigma in healthcare settings” for the degree of
 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty 6D110200 “Public Health”**

The dissertation work of Balnur Iskakova is focused on assessing HIV-related stigma in primary healthcare settings in Almaty and studying the factors that drive stigma against people living with HIV (PLHIV) among medical workers.

Before conducting the current study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted by Balnur Iskakova under the supervision of the scientific advisors. As it was summarized by the literature review, stigma and discrimination against PLHIV remains serving as one of the barriers of effective HIV management and care over the world. It was indeed interesting to realize in scientific literature that the most commonly experienced areas of stigma and discrimination are the healthcare settings that provide medical care to conditions other than HIV. Furthermore, compared to other countries, there was a scarcity of published scientific research conducted in healthcare settings in Kazakhstan. Therefore, we have designed a mixed method study to investigate this issue from the perspective of healthcare providers in Almaty. A communication based on Balnur Iskakova’s first of year PhD was published on “Vestnik Kaznmu”.

For data collection purposes 8 primary healthcare settings in Almaty were selected from which 448 medical workers agreed to participate voluntarily. Throughout her PhD program Balnur managed to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data and validate (available in Kazakh and Russian languages) a tool for assessing HIV-related stigma among medical workers. This phase of the study is published in a scientific journal (Plos One) and the tools are shared for further use in research. This may indicate the level of quality of the current dissertation work and the dedication of the fellow doctoral student to become a professional specialist in the field of healthcare research. Currently, Balnur together with the scientific advisors have also been working on the second paper which is based on the mixed method research findings.



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The findings of this study may serve as a precursor for future studies and interventions on HIV-related stigma. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods within standardized validated tools enables one to better understand the issue of stigma and discrimination from the perspective of a healthcare provider. Therefore, I believe the current thesis has both theoretical and practical significance and meets all the requirements for awarding Balnur Iskakova with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty 6D110200 "Public Health".

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course at the department of epidemiology,
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