



UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI PAVIA

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE CLINICO-CHIRURGICHE,
DIAGNOSTICHE E PEDIATRICHE

Unità.....Malattie Infettive e Tropicali ed Epatologia.....

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RE: Aigerim Mustapayeva, PhD Candidate

I am very happy to write this letter about my work with Dr Aigerim Mustapayeva during her PhD candidature. I met Aigerim Mustapayeva in 2016 in Almaty and then worked with her when she spent a period of time in Pavia, in 2017. During her stay in Pavia, Aigerim worked with my team to plan for research activities in Kazakhstan, including the realization of an epidemiological study using surgical records from a national registry of patients treated for CE in the country and the implementation of a pilot field survey to study the prevalence of the disease in southern Kazakhstan. Aigerim was also instructed in the use of the WHO-IWGE classification for the diagnosis and staging of CE. Throughout the planning process, Dr. Mustapayeva showed me that she is a very intelligent and hardworking young researcher. After her time in Pavia, Dr Mustapayeva returned to Almaty to conduct her study. She was able to set up the study and conduct it leading an international team in the field, including some members of my lab. This shows that Aigerim has not only learnt how to diagnose and stage CE during her PhD training, but also skills necessary to work as a researcher in international collaborations. I believe this to be a key feature for researchers working in the field of tropical medicine and radiology in resource-limited settings. Aigerim also showed to be inventive, as the study was conducted with limited resources, as it is often the case when working with CE.

Overall, Aigerim's activity as a PhD student led to two publications in international journals: "Incidence Rates of Surgically Managed Cystic Echinococcosis in Kazakhstan, 2007-2016. *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2020;102(1):90-95. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.19-0572" and "Ultrasound-based evaluation of the prevalence of abdominal cystic echinococcosis in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan. *Trans R Soc Trop Med Hyg.* 2022 Mar 2;116(3):222-226." The latter was the largest survey on CE carried out in Kazakhstan and one of the largest in Central Asia. I expect the two studies to be well-cited over the next few years.

Dr Aigerim Mustapayeva has profoundly matured as a researcher in the last few years, and I fully endorse her Ph.D. application. I believe Aigerim has the potential to become a leader in the medical community and a point of reference for physicians dealing with CE in Central Asia.

Best wishes