

Opponent's Report on Dissertation Thesis

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Title of the Thesis:	Essays on health economics and health policy
Type of Defense:	DEFENSE
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Opponent:	Michal Horný, Ph.D., MSc.

The dissertation entitled “*Essays on health economics and health policy*” authored by PhDr. Jana Votápková presents three empirical studies of important health economics issues such as hospital efficiency, the impact of demand-side cost-sharing on the utilization of inpatient care, and the relationship between health status and pre-retirement savings. A fourth essay – completing the dissertation – summarizes the findings of the three empirical studies and draws tangible recommendations for policymakers.

The original contribution of the author is apparent. Each of the three empirical studies **builds on existing international literature** and **contributes new evidence** to the growing body of literature on health-economic issues in countries of the Visegrád Group, especially the Czech Republic. Such contribution is **extremely valuable** to open-minded policymakers in the respective countries. Most empirical literature in the field of health economics focuses on health care issues faced by large nations such as the United States or China. Due to stark systemic, cultural, and other local differences, translating evidence from these countries into local practice not only is complicated but also may lead to unexpected and undesired consequences.

Individual **chapters of the thesis are undoubtedly publishable in respected economic journals.** As a matter of fact, Chapter 1 has already been published in the Journal of Productivity Analysis, and Chapter 3 has been published in the IES Working Paper series. This is a clear indication of the rigor of the research comprising the dissertation.

I thank the author for **thoughtfully and diligently responding to my and other reviewers' comments** on the pre-defense version of the dissertation. In Chapter 1, I especially appreciated that the author added a brief discussion of quality as an important dimension of the output of hospital care. I understand that measurement of patients' health status is technically difficult, although I would not use the term “impossible.” As the author notes, various measures of the quality of care have been employed in the literature, such as risk-adjusted mortality, readmission rate, or timeliness of care. Assessment of the efficiency of Czech hospitals in terms of quality of care, thus, remains an important area for future research.

In response to my previous comment on Chapter 1, the author claims that *“The results of the analysis suggest that nonprofit hospitals tend to be less efficient than their for-profit counterparts due to a different management structure. Most probably, the principal-agent problem is part of the explanation.”* I would like to ask the author to elaborate on this point. While it is likely that shareholders and supervisory boards exert more pressure on hospital management than public bodies, how exactly would this pressure impact the principal (patient) – agent (provider) relationship, including the resource-efficiency of provided care? Without consideration of the quality of care, it is difficult to judge whether the provision of more efficient care (in terms of input resources) is desirable or not from the patient’s perspective.

Overall, **I was impressed by the quality and rigor of the dissertation** authored by PhDr. Jana Votápková. The **dissertation would be defendable** at both Emory University (my current home institution) and Boston University (my previous institution). Without hesitation, **I recommend the thesis for defense without substantial changes.**

Date:	April 27, 2020
Opponent’s Signature:	
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