

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES

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In the concept of investigations it was assumed that educated people would play an important role in creation of social needs and sensible pro-health behaviours viewed in connection with physical education. The studies period would be used to realize these intentions with PE perceived as a subject understood not only as caring about physical fitness but mainly as a subject for the maintenance and improvement of students' health.

Physical activity in the period of secondary education, expectations towards PE during the period of studies and an attitude towards physical activity in general should ease to plan and promote pro health behaviours, physical activity and personal physical fitness throughout the entire life. At the same time the students' attitudes reflect the efficiency of PE classes in secondary and primary schools.

The aim of the study was to determine the first year students' attitudes towards a healthy life style in terms of, among other things, their attitudes towards physical activity.

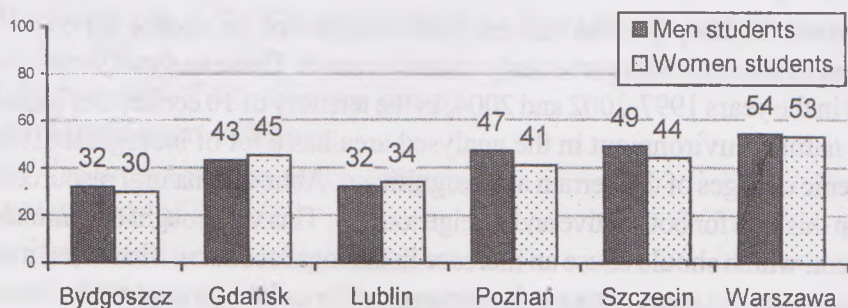
Material and Method

A diagnostic survey based on an anonymous questionnaire was applied. The first year students of Medicine and Pharmacy Faculties of the selected at random Medical Universities (Bydgoszcz, Gdansk, Lublin, Poznac, Szczecin, Warszawa) took part in the investigations carried out in the academic year 2002/2003. They all participated in obligatory, weekly PE classes during the investigations. 1457 subjects filled in the questionnaires – 1058 women (73%) and 339 men (27%).

Results

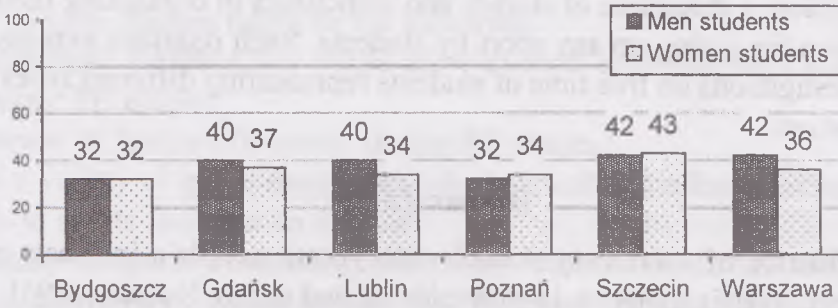
Approximately every third woman (39%) declared taking up physical activity in leisure while in secondary school. The questionnaires showed that as students of different Universities they varied in terms of physical activities in that period. The most numerous group that undertook such an activity came from Warsaw Medical University – 53%. In the Medical University in Bydgoszcz nearly every third respondent declared the above.

Men students more often intended their participation in physical exercises after school in secondary school than women – (43%). Every second student of Warsaw Medical University declared so, and the least often the students of the Universities in Bydgoszcz and Lublin-every third – Pic.1.



Pic.1. Declared physical activity in secondary school after obligatory PE lessons (date in %)

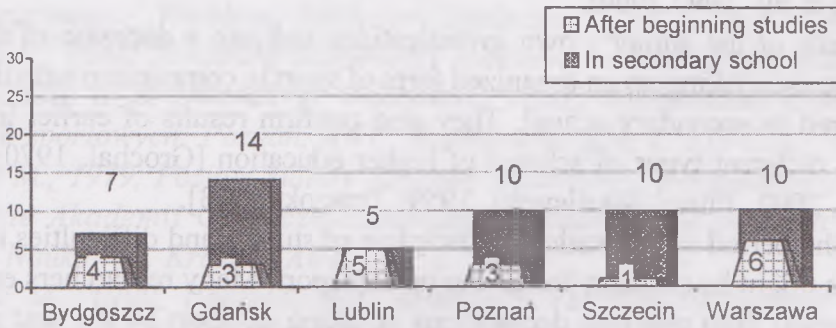
A physical activity index of the first year students can be the percentage of their participation in sport competitions while in secondary school. Every third woman (33%) and every third man (32%) declared so.



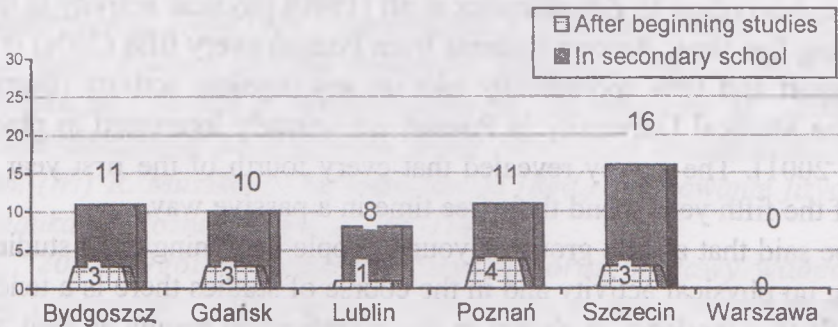
Pic.2 Declared participation in sport competitions while in secondary school (date in %)

Another index of physical activity of the first year students can be the percentage of people participating in sport trainings. Physical activity in secondary school, apart from PE lessons, in a little degree related to a sport training, since approximately every eleventh woman (9%) and tenth man (11%) declared participation in sport training – Pic.4.

Information presented in bar graphs shows a substantial limitation of physical activity in leisure due to studies period at the medical academy. A slight percentage of women and men declare their participation in sport trainings – 4% and 7% respectively – Pic.3&4.



Pic.3. Declared participation of women students in sport trainings while in secondary school and during the first year of studies (date in %)



Pic.4 Declared participation of men students in sport trainings while in secondary school and during the first year of studies (date in %)

A comparison of this data with the intentions to participate in competitions in secondary school indicates a considerable decrease of the first year students' interests in taking up sport in the Students Sports Association or any sports clubs. During the period of adaptation, a discipline of studies and difficulties in organizing their own time might be a reason for giving up any sport by students. Such opinions expressed authors conducting investigations on free time of students representing different types of schools of higher education.

Discussion

Little influence of secondary school onto young people's interests in physical education present investigations on 18-year-olds carried out by Nowak [1995]. According to whom only every second secondary school student understands a connection between a participation in PE lessons with health care. Little efficiency of these lessons confirm researches of Strugarek [2002], in which over half of the students finishing secondary school admitted that PE lessons did not arouse their interests in physical activity. The scientists agreeably claim that predominating forms of spending free time by secondary school students are passive [Charzewski, 1997; Król-Zielińska at all. 2000; Wołosz, Parnicka, 2003].

An unfavourably tendency of a decreasing, with age, percentage of secondary school children practicing exercises onto those intending less frequent exercises indicate investigation results on secondary school children's physical activity [Charzewski, 1997; Woynarowska at all, 1992,2000].

The results of the author's own investigations indicate a decrease of the first year students' interests in taking up an organized form of sport in comparison with their physical activity declared in secondary school. They also confirm results of earlier investigations carried out in different types of schools of higher education [Grochal, 1970; Jurkiewicz, 1983; Lisicki, 2002; Pilicz, Wasilewski, 1959; Troszok, 1973].

During the period of adaptation, a discipline of studies and difficulties in organizing their own time might be a reason for giving up any sport. Many researchers emphasize the fact of withdrawal from previous declarations of taking up sport by the first year students [Bukowiec, 1979; Lisicki, 2002; Pełowski, 1995; Piątkowski, 1987]. Probably such a decision was affected by PE lessons in schools, because according to Bukowiec [1990] only every fourth student (26%) attributed interest in physical activity to school.

Similarly as secondary school children students rarely take up physical activity in their free time. According to Zdunkiewicz at all [1980] physical activity is the least often way of spending free time. Among students from Poznań every fifth (20%) is passive with reference to sport and 19% sporadically take up any physical activity [Bomirska, 2000]. Students of the Medical University in Poznań are scarcely interested in physical activity [Bartkowiak, 2001]. The survey revealed that every fourth of the first year students and every third of the fifth year spend their free time in a passive way.

It can be said that a little group of young people beginning their studies voluntarily declare taking up physical activity and in the course of studies there is a tendency to limit this activity. Such a tendency is shown in the investigation results as well as data of the Chief Central Statistical Office (GUS) with reference to a number of students practicing in organizational units of the Students Sports Association [Lisicki, 2004]. The data of GUS is less favourable than the students' own declarations.

Conclusion

It seems necessary to take actions leading to a change of a way PE academic teachers work in order to create during PE classes patterns of active ways of spending leisure. Indications of such changes might be the following:

- organizational solutions that would allow students to choose days and hours of their obligatory PE classes;
- preference of 'entire life sports' during PE classes;
- widen a variety of sports disciplines (physical activity) offered during PE classes;
- access to sports facilities on days off.

Popularity of sports disciplines, empirically determined on the first classes in the following academic years, would be a point of reference for the university authorities and PE academic teachers employed in the Study Center for PE and Sport who are interested in promoting active ways of spending free time in students.

It might be recommended to carry out surveys that would allow the authorities and PE academic teachers of the Study Centers for PE and Sport collect and analyze students' expectations towards PE at the university level. The results of these surveys would make an argument in talks with the authorities for changes leading to more attractive PE programs.

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Abstract The aim of the study was to determine the first year students' of medical universities attitudes towards a healthy life style in terms of, among other things, their attitudes towards physical activity. A diagnostic survey based on an anonymous questionnaire was applied. All of the students from six singled out medical academies that participated in their obligatory; weekly PE classes took part in the investigations carried out in the academic year 2002/2003. 1457 subjects filled in the questionnaires.

Key words: medical academy, students, and physical activity.