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*Analysis of health-promoting behaviours of 14-year-olds
of selected schools of Lublin*

“Health is a basic human right as well as a social purpose of basic significance for the fulfilment of human needs conditioning the quality of human life” (1). The modern definition of health emphasizes that health needs to be protected and cherished in all periods of human life. The health of an individual as well as of the community depends on many interrelated factors. The most important of them include health behaviours. We can distinguish the following types of behaviours: health-promoting (pro-health, positive), e.g. physical activity, rational nutrition, and health destructive (anti-health, negative), e.g. smoking cigarettes, alcohol abuse and other addictives. Health education including health promotion is the basic right of every child. School health education is commonly regarded as the most efficient. The categories of health behaviours that require promotional intervention include: nutrition habits, smoking tobacco, alcohol consumption, physical activity, coping with stress, sexual behaviours, pharmacomania and drug addiction (2).

The aim of the study is to analyze the selected pro-health behaviours of students aged 14. The study was conducted by means of a self-made survey questionnaire. The survey was carried out in the city of Lublin among the students of Lublin schools selected at random.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Physical activity is indispensable for health as well as for proper physical, social and mental development of a child. It also makes up for mental overpressure, prevents the occurrence of kinetic system disorders and obesity and is an important element of correction and therapy of various diseases as well as the source of joy and success (3, 4). The youth under survey were asked to try and assess their physical activity and define the ways they practice sports, time devoted to do their homework and favourite leisure activities.

The majority of the subjects, as many as 44%, find their physical fitness very good, 38% find it good. Only 7% of the subjects evaluate their fitness as poor. As many as 44% of the respondents do not participate in any after-school activities. The most popular of them are sporting events (37%) and educational activities (15%). Physical activity of the students is manifested in individual practice (34%) and in team sports (27%). The remaining ones merely participate in PE classes at school. The most popular leisure activities are social meetings (52%) and watching television (48%). The time devoted to this kind of leisure is most frequently between 2 and 4 hours a day. Only 35% of the

students spend their spare time in fresh air and as few as 3% dedicate more than four hours to this. In the surveyed group, 42% of the students spend 2–3 hours per day doing their homework, while 31% spend one or two hours on these activities.

Rational nutrition in childhood and adolescence is conducive to proper development of the child, its health, good frame of mind, attitude to learning. It prevents obesity, hypercholesteraemia, cancers, dental decay and others as well as shapes positive nutrition habits which are continued in their adult life and are passed on to the next generation (3, 4). Man should have a meal once every four hours during the day. Starting learning with empty stomach and avoiding having meals at school causes the feeling of hunger. 58% of the subjects always have breakfast before going to school, 29% – sometimes, while 13% do not eat breakfasts at all. Lunch at school is not a popular meal, it is consumed only by 40% of the respondents. The majority of them, as many as 86%, always have dinner. Only 2% never have dinner. As far as supper is concerned, this meal is regularly consumed by 63%, sometimes by 31% and never by 6%.

In the majority of cases, as many as 90%, the meals are based on sandwiches and cooked dishes. For 8% sandwiches are the only meal during the day. Daily meals of 87% of the students include meat, dairy products, fruit and vegetables. 2% of the subjects use vegetarian diet.

The question: “Would you like to change anything in your eating habits?” was answered negatively by 44% of the respondents. Others mentioned more than one answer, mainly that they would like to eat more fruit and vegetables (25%) or drink more fruit juice (23%). The remaining ones would like to eat better food, have sandwiches at school every day, eat more hot dishes.

Smoking tobacco belongs to the behaviours that have negative influence on health. Harmfulness of smoking results from toxic properties of tobacco smoke. The most frequent consequences of smoking include: reduced resistance to acute diseases, reduced physical efficiency, feeling of tiredness and discomfort, increased incidence of cancers, diseases of blood circulation system, protracted respiratory system diseases (3, 4). The sooner smoking begins and the more intensive it is the more serious and faster health problems are. The research shows that 62% of the students do not smoke cigarettes, while 4% of them are regular and 9% – occasional smokers.

The results were similar when the question was the issue of alcohol drinking. 60% of the respondents do not drink alcohol. Alcoholic beverages preferred by young people include: beer (47%), champagne (31%), wine (19%), vodka (3%). The students say that they have drunk alcohol for two years (20%), one year (13%), several months (40%). The frequency of drinking is as follows: once a week – 7%, several times a month – 13%, a few times a year – 53%, once a year – 27% (mainly on New Year’s Eve). 8% of the students claim they have been intoxicated by alcohol at least once, 6% – twice, 2% claim it has happened to them more than ten times.

The research into the issue of taking drugs revealed that 93% of the students have never tried using any drugs, 1% have taken drugs in their lives, while 6% are not sure about using drugs in the past. Those who claim to have had contact with narcotics mention pharmaceuticals and amphetamine. 61% of the subjects claim that glue sniffing is a harmless experiment of the growing period. 13% of the 14-year-olds believe that there is nothing wrong in getting drunk from time to time. 7% of the respondents maintain they need alcohol in order to enjoy themselves and have fun.

The subjective assessment of teenagers’ health is positive. 51% of the respondents find their health very good, 38% – good, while 9% believe it is not good and 1% claim it is bad. The frequency of falling ill by the teenagers was as follows: twice a year – 47%, once a year – 33%, once a month – 12%, no such incidence – 9%. 38% of the subjects have been hospitalized. The most frequent reasons for admission to hospital include surgical diseases (hernia, tonsil removal, appendicitis) – 25%, accidents and injuries – 16%, food poisoning and WZW – 19%.

In the surveyed group 24% were satisfied with the lifestyle they have, while the remaining ones mentioned one of the following mistakes: too little sleep – 50%, malnutrition – 12%, inability to relax properly – 12%.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Self-evaluation of health and physical activity is perceived as good or very good.
2. Analysis of pro-health behaviours revealed insufficient knowledge among the majority of students.
3. Proper pro-health education and health promotion plays an essential role in changing such negative behaviours.

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SUMMARY

The health of an individual and of the community depends on many interrelated factors, including health behaviours which are one of the most important of these factors. The aim of the paper was to analyze the selected pro-health behaviours of 14-year old students. The research was carried out by means of a self-made questionnaire. The survey was conducted in the city of Lublin among 250 students of Lublin schools selected at random. The results of the survey were the basis for the following conclusions: self-evaluation of health and physical activity is perceived as good or very good; analysis of pro-health behaviours revealed insufficient knowledge among the majority of students; proper pro-health education and health promotion plays an essential role in changing such negative behaviours.

Analiza zachowań prozdrowotnych 14-letnich uczniów wybranych szkół lubelskich

Zdrowie jednostki i społeczeństwa zależy od wielu wzajemnie powiązanych czynników. Do najważniejszych należą między innymi zachowania zdrowotne. Celem pracy była analiza zachowań prozdrowotnych uczniów w wieku 14 lat. W badaniach zastosowano metodę kwestionariusza ankiety własnej konstrukcji. Badania zostały przeprowadzone na terenie Lublina, przebadano 250 uczniów losowo wybranych szkół lubelskich. Sformułowano następujące wnioski: samoocena zdrowia i aktywności fizycznej jest podawana jako dobra bądź bardzo dobra; analiza zachowań prozdrowotnych wykazuje niedostatek wiedzy większości badanych uczniów. Istotną rolę w zmianie tych zachowań powinna odegrać właściwa edukacja prozdrowotna.