

**RESOLUTION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE:
Physical Education and Sport in Research
Aging and Physical Activity**

Rydzyzna, Poland, 10-12 September 2009

The Scientific Conference, which was organized on 10-12 September in Rydzyna, Poland, was attended by over 140 participants from 18 countries. The participants of the Conference adopt this resolution with deep conviction that physical education and sport are an important part of the tradition and cultural heritage of every country. The needs related to promoting and creating conditions for undertaking physical activity by the elderly and people of advanced age constitute medical, economic and social challenges of recent years and foreseeable future. Not only do people want to live longer, but they also want to maintain independence and high quality of life.

Despite the fact that many years ago (1978) UNESCO identified physical education as one of the basic human rights, in some countries physical education is under challenge. It is sometimes suggested by authorities to reduce or even eliminate physical education classes in order to realize cost savings or to focus on other subjects considered to be more "academic". In many countries, physical education teachers are afforded low status within society. Furthermore, there is often a lack of sports equipment and facilities. The awareness of the significance of physical education for the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of children and teenagers is very low, not only in Poland, but also worldwide. In contrast, numerous scientific studies have repeatedly found that participating in physical activity is strongly

correlated with numerous other elements of healthy lifestyle among children and teenagers.

Alarming phenomena can also be observed in the functioning of professional sport. Sport, in its humanistic doctrine, is based on noble values - equality, justice and fairness in competition, respect for human rights, peaceful cooperation between the people of different races, religions, and countries. Nowadays, it is very common in sport to break traditional moral values, arrange wins and defeats, and use illegal substances. Prejudice and poor sportsmanship by both spectators and competitors with little respect for ethics and sporting values too often characterizes modern sporting events. Participants in the 2009 Rydzyna Congress believe that sport can and should cultivate the highest moral values and be a role model of good customs and respect for others.

In recent decades we have observed a dramatic worldwide increase in the impact of diseases which are directly caused by sedentary lifestyles. Many scientific studies have demonstrated the role that physical activity plays in the prevention of chronic diseases and preservation of functional independence. There is now strong evidence that regular physical activity can help to increase life expectancy. In addition, physical inactivity and sedentary behavior is implicated in the alarming increase in overweight and obesity throughout the world. Physical activity has been shown to be associated with a reduction in cardiovascular

diseases, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, falls, and various injuries. Physical activity also improves muscular strength and endurance which is especially important for older persons who face limitations in their ability to perform activities of daily living due to declines in fitness. In addition, physical activity impacts a number of variables related to overall quality of life, including cognitive and emotional function, life satisfaction and feelings of well-being, sexual function, social function, recreation and economic status.

Significant societal benefits are likely to be realized by increasing physical activity among older persons. Older persons have much to contribute to society. Physically active lifestyles help them to maintain their independence and optimize the degree to which they are capable of participating in work and social events. Promoting healthy and active lifestyles will enable the society to benefit from the wealth of experiences and wisdom possessed by seniors in a better way.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Physical education is a basic human right. It should be conducted while taking into account the needs and interests of all children. Physical education should focus on both preparing for physical activity and healthy living, as well as for developing motor skills and literacy. These benefits apply not only for children but also for adults and the elderly.
2. The quality of physical education depends mainly on the level of qualifications and the knowledge, skills, and abilities of physical education teachers. Special attention should be paid to the preparation of teachers charged with carrying out physical education classes in kindergarten and primary schools.
3. It is necessary to guarantee a proper place for physical education in school curricula and provide children and teenagers with wider access to sports equipment and facilities outside of school. In this way, governments and local communities can demonstrate their understanding for the need for physical education and health and emphasise the educational role of frequent participation in physical activity in and outside of the school setting.
4. The development of contemporary professional sport, intensive training and increasing financial and other pressures require the application of state-of-the-art advances in social, psychological, biological, and medical sciences in order to safeguard the health and well-being of athletes.
5. The popularity of sport provides us with an opportunity to shape the patterns of social behaviour and demonstrate real authority and moral values. The greatest efforts should be undertaken to eliminating the use of illegal substances, and towards implementing rules of fair play for all. We should re-emphasize the integrative, aesthetic and spiritual value of sporting events. Without these factors sport is dehumanized, it loses its moral and social value.
6. Governments and local authorities should support policies and programs which provide opportunities for physical activity participation for persons of all ages. These opportunities should include regular physical education classes for children, as well as increased programs and facilities for middle-aged and older adults.
7. Universities and colleges should place greater emphasis on educating students about the importance of physical activity for persons of all ages and abilities. Particular attention should be paid to preparing future generations of researchers and health professionals to help meet the needs of all citizens.

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