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## Shaping pro-health attitudes of physiotherapy students of the Medical University of Warsaw

### **Abstract**

Key words: lifestyle, physical fitness, physical activity, health-related behaviors

Over a number of years it has become noticeable that the importance of physiotherapy in the primary treatment of patients has increased. Physiotherapists are regarded as an equal member of the medical team. With the development of medicine and increased interest in physical activity among the elderly and disabled, there are new fields of activity. Each physiotherapist is expected to be an inspiring example of a healthy lifestyle. They should influence their patients with their attitude, skills and fitness. The main aim of the present study was the evaluation of chosen components of lifestyle and physical fitness among physiotherapy students of the Medical University of Warsaw. Moreover, there was also an attempt to determine the influence of curricular courses on the change of health behaviour and physical fitness.

The study involved 551 physiotherapy students of the Medical University of Warsaw (398 females and 153 males). Only students who completed two attempts of the International Physical Fitness Test (once in the first and once in the second academic year) were qualified for the study. The survey involved 483 first-year students (353 females and 130 males) and 421 second-year students (307 females and 114 males). The assessments (physical fitness tests and questionnaires) were performed between 2010 and 2018 at the Department of Rehabilitation (Division of Physiotherapy, Medical University of Warsaw).

The research consisted of five parts. The following research tools were used to determine the level of fitness and physical activity as well as health-related behaviours and habits:

1. Physical fitness was assessed using the International Test of Physical Fitness (MTSF).

2. For the assessment of chosen components of lifestyle the Juczyński Health Behaviour Inventory (HZZ) was used.
3. The physical activity level was determined using the International Physical Activity Questionnaire - short version (IPAQ).
4. The pain characteristics were obtained using the Laitinen Pain Scale.
5. The biometrical data and all the information regarding the motives for activity, health training, past injuries and any prevention procedures (wellness) were obtained using self-designed questionnaires.

The findings of the research fulfilled the main aims of the study and the conclusions are as follows:

1. Majority of students (female and male) both in the first and second year of studies are characterised by low levels of health behaviour. The significant statistical changes in the health behaviour index occur among women between the first and second year of studies. No significant changes can be found in the male results between both years of studies.
2. According to the results, the highest percentage of first and second year students were classified into sufficient level of physical activity. No statistically significant differences were found in the physical activity of men and women between the first and second year of studies.
3. Majority of the first and second year students were characterised by low and medium levels of the general physical fitness. It was found statistically significant differences in the results of general physical fitness between men and women in the first and the second year of the studies.
4. Statistically significant differences in self-reported health and fitness between the first and the second year of the studies were found in the female group. In the male group, no statistically significant differences were found.