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Progress in physical activity of elderly people in hygienic and health aspect

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Abstract

Physical activity of the elderly provides maintenance of efficiency, health for many years of life. It affects also on the extension of independence and is the cure on many maladies of old age. We can observe the effects of the coming old-age in the second half of life, middle aged, when we are getting older and occurs slow reduction of physical and psychical capacity of organism. „We run to die healthy” - who among us doesn't imagine how to be efficiency to the end of life in good sport condition? Physical efficiency allows us to achieve optimal quality of life everyday and the performance of motion activities, necessary for health of elderly people.

The sole goal of this article is to show how shaped by the views from the past on physical activity of elderly and views of doctors and activists of physical culture on seniors efficiency. The issue physical activity of the elderly is little known because we always pay attention on progress the children and the teenagers, what confirm many pedagogical works. We have not much science publications which encourage the elderly to active and healthy lifestyle. During the research following methods were used: source materials search, source amassing, combining those materials, analysing and interpreting the source materials, also explaining some of the historical facts with reference to reality of that times. The research covers elaborations about physical activities, medicine and history of physical culture field literature, and the recreation of elderly. Furthermore the method of individual observation was used. The article shows the role of the elderly people physical activity in hygienic aspect and his influence on extension of life. A very important role plays also family, their help, care on senior and mutual support and social awareness, which allows to actively participate the elderly in physical culture, whose aim is to maintain the efficiency to the end of life.

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Introduction

Physical activity of the elderly through health care, diet and hygiene promotes bodily fitness, prolongs youth, prevents loneliness and emptiness. Movement becomes a cure for many ailments. Physical activity in an older age is extremely important for health, allowing it to maintain fitness and independence for longer, and to improve mental health. Taking care of the physical condition, we care about the nervous system, which maintains the activity and health of seniors.

When we get older, „we run to die healthy”, in the sport form looking forward of a decent age and be fit until end in life. Physical inactivity is a dynamic aging of the body, a gradual decrease in mental and physical fitness of the body is a sign of coming old age. It starts in the second half of life, and its effects can be seen in middle age or elderly, therefore we exercise for health, pleasure, to maintain a good condition and well-being. The role of physical activity is to be a healthy and happy person, socially beneficial. It is an invaluable way to have a successful personal and professional life through health and sport - these are the values that accompany and should accompany us in the 21st century. A man should learn to grow old and how to maintain dignity in his life, physical activity is the main element of a healthy and hygienic lifestyle. Old age is the wisdom of the past life and the joy of living in preserved health.

Materials and methods

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During the research following methods were used: source materials search, source amassing, combining those materials (Toporowicz 1996, p. 123), analysing and interpreting the source materials, also explaining some of the historical facts with reference to reality of that times. The research covers elaborations about physical activities, medicine and history of physical culture field literature, and the recreation of elderly. Furthermore the method of individual observation was used. The article shows the role of the elderly people physical activity in hygienic aspect and his influence on extension of life. A very important role plays also family, their help, care on senior and mutual support and social awareness, which allows to actively participate the elderly in physical culture, whose aim is to maintain the efficiency to the end of life.

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Interest in the efficiency of the elderly was accompanied by people from the dawn of history, their physical activity was defined as the strength and condition necessary for work and survival. Through work, tooling, and experience, man gained and learned motor skills from his ancestors; this work was done only by the power of human muscles. Dexterity, endurance and speed were the hallmarks of human motor skills. Motor fitness was to serve life and health.

From the beginning of its existence, man had to deal with illnesses and already in the stone age existed traumatic surgery, based on the “doctor” institution, when connected broken bones, overlap dressings wound and stitched wound healing, which served to improve health.

In the Neolithic period, attempts were made to treat patients with complicated surgical procedures such as trepanation of skull, use of laxatives, laxatives, and pain relievers (hemp, opium). Blood was letting by the opening the veins, cupping therapy, and other methods were used. Experimental medicine came to an end when a man began to wonder about the cause of illness. Prehistoric people attributed their longevity to higher powers or their ancestors. At favorable times, when the tribe had enough of food, and there was some survival when there was no danger, the old man was in a decent position, surrounded by the aura of supernatural authority by longevity. He was surrounded by honor and respect, and he played an important social role, namely, he was a guide between the temporal world and the supernatural – the sorcerer or the priest.

According to the African proverb ... *When the old man dies, the whole library get burns down* (Minois 1995, p. 20), the old man as the principal source of knowledge and memory of the tribe was an educator, judge, associated with his wisdom and experience. At primitive peoples, bearded and gray-haired men held power as the Council of Elders, which was the most respectable institution in civilizations of spoken tradition. The old man, depending on the circumstances, was surrounded with respect or contempt, worshiped or condemned to death, was a source of wisdom, and at the same time infirm, impotent, unnecessary, threatening the existence of the group. People was faced with the problem of old age have created all sorts of solutions: respect, rejection, indifference, care - these attitudes brutally was express fear, misunderstanding and powerlessness in the face of aging. Every society tried to live and survive, feared the powerlessness and sterile that old age was carrying. The fact that the man lived 70–80 years was an extraordinary feat that could be achieved through the help and care of the gods.

Ptah – a hotep who, after complaining for physical infirmity, boasted himself that the gods to bestow him grace, wishing his son to live to see to the same age as him, 110 years. Long life was the reward the gods admits the righteous.

Physical activity of primitive people was a time of adaptation to the natural environment, of mastering life skills, of opposing the threats of reality and of benefiting from

it, consisting in the existence of primitive man. Later, the development of bodily and physical fitness, necessary for survival in a difficult environment, developed. Physical exercises played a very important instinctive role, due to external hazards and to maintain the physical fitness of adults, who improved their vital functions while raising their hunting skills (Lipoński 2012, p. 23).

The care of a good body in Chinese and Indian culture were recognized since the earliest times, these were the oldest civilizations of the world, so despite differences I decided to combine them and describe them together.

Indian society attached great importance to hygiene and cleanliness, physical exercise conditioned by the country's defense requirements (Wroczyński 1979, p. 32). Sports that have been cultivated were mainly wrestling where they have achieved great physical fitness thanks to special massage (athletic, healing and hygienic). They used water baths to maintain high body hygiene. The most important religious system was yoga, which included physical exercise and was intended to control the body through the will of man.

The purpose of these exercises was to strive for the perfection of body and spirit through concentration, meditation, respiratory exercises, bans, and injunctions. In India, physical exercise were used as a means of maintaining and improving health. In the sacred books of the Vedas – Ayur Vedanta were recommendations for the hygiene of medical gymnastics (Wilk 1985, p.6). The two most prominent Indian physicians, Charaks (beginning of AD) and Sushruta (6th century BC), recommended exercising in the treatment of many diseases, exchanging a number of advantages of physical activity according to their age and health. They recommended systematic exercise.

Buddhism, which originated in India, has had a great impact on the spiritual life of China and Tibet. Chinese society especially cared about the elderly and recognized the family as the basis for social order, ancestor worship and the main source of wisdom (Wroczyński 1979, p. 21). Confucius (551–479 BC), a Chinese philosopher, wrote in Book Li that young people were taught six virtues, six activities and six teachings. **Virtues:** wisdom, charity, justice, fidelity, goodness, consensus. **Actions:** respect for parents, friendship to the brothers, cordiality to the relatives of the wife, friendship for the neighbors, compassion for misfortune and harm. **Sciences:** ceremonial court life, music, archery, car driving, writing, math.

Many of the activities carried out by Chinese society were cultivated until the late ages, ex. archery, which was the best way to social, moral and character education. The Chinese society knew *Kong Fu* gymnastics, which served to improve the body and support its immunity, grown by the elderly. On the other hand, the *taj - tsy* system defined the order of movements and the rhythmicity with which one passed from one attitude to another had a therapeutic significance (Wilk 1985, p. 5). *Nej Tsing (Book on Internal Life)*, written in the 3rd century AD, is the meaning of physical training for human health. It is the ancient Chinese *medicine canon of the yellow cesar Huang-Ti* (Minois 1995, p. 27). *Szenga* – a system of gymnastic exercises for the elderly, performed in

the sitting and lying position, also used a massage that stimulated muscular activity, as a therapeutic and preventive method has a positive influence on the respiratory and circulatory system, alleviated pain (Wilk 1985, p. 6). The masseur used his hands, elbows, feet and nails. It was combined with acupuncture – it is a puncture treatment with needles. There are over 693 vital points in the human body.

The first hygienic indications were created in China, India and Egypt, which concerned prevention and health protection, based on practical habits and customs as well as religious indications to protect human life and health. This practice was based on the experience of generations and drew conclusions and hygienic indications on proper nutrition, cleanliness, sleep, rest, and is used today. Over time, magical rituals have given birth to scientific medicine in China 4000 years ago, this knowledge has been written down on bamboo tablets containing the patient's symptoms, appropriate remedies, recipes, dosage and ways of using it in herbal medicine. Old-fashioned medicine is a philosophy of life, taking care of the physical and mental health of man.

The development of hygiene in Egypt has affected life expectancy, and health care has supported hygienic practices commonly used. Homes had bathrooms and toilets, ashes were used, clay, soda, mouth rinsed with salt water. Depilatory treatments were applied: manicures and pedicures, as well as ointments. The ancient Egyptians developed the cult of beauty and physical fitness (Wroczyński 1979, p. 28).

Herodotus (484–425 BC), describing the *Longevity Ethiopians* and seeking the mysterious source of longevity, wrote about the physical fitness of the elderly, presented the Egyptians and the Lebanese as the healthiest people of all who have “the highest in the world” physical fitness (Minois 1995, p.31). The family in ancient Egypt was a sacred institution. It was in the family that the principles of hygiene and health were taught. Herodotus argued that Egyptian elders should not leave their own fate, because according to the custom, daughters are obliged to keep their parents.

The fate of the old without children had to be regrettable; the lonely old man was placed on a par with the poor, the sick, the handicapped - there was a hospice for the poor in whom they found shelter most in need in Nippur in Mesopotamia. The old man and the old woman were treated with respect. The oldest image of the old man – the statue of Ebih-Ila, the administrator of the city of Mari – from 2700 BC with a bald, bearded figure was emanated a great dignity, reminding us that in this society every older man was in contact with the god. The old people were respected all the more so because they were so few in the world where the art of writing was rare, they were living archives and a code of laws, and their experience was immortal and useful in an environment that did not worship physical beauty but was valued for wisdom.

Since the dawn of history, man has been endeavoring for health and longevity through hygienic living. “Hygiene” (from Greek *hygieinos* – from Hygiei Greek goddess Hygiei) was engaged in research and observation of factors influencing health (Korczak 1982, p. 17). Already in Antiquity Hippocrates (460–370 BC) has developed new foundations of medical thought and knowledge, hygienic and health indica-

tions and regulations for the protection of health and life, *first harmless* (Wilk 1985). Through Humorous Theory, consisting of four elements such as cold, heat, dryness and humidity, he believed that the illness affected the human environment, he used climate treatment, baths, diets, gymnastics, walking, running, boxing and wrestling.

The most important state decisions belonged to the Council of Elders, they were called *gerousia* (*geron* – old) (Burda et al., 2002, p. 86). Council members may be meritorious citizens, must be over 60 and still be selected for life.

In *The Age of Cicero* (106–43 BC) he talked about active and cheerful, well-to-do lives, interest and exercise in virtues, remaining a useful mind, advice and experience for young children. Cicero's work is a beautiful praise of old age. The old man spoke beautiful, taught the youths about old age, which gentle and quiet, she came after life in good health, noble and beautiful. The good meaning of old age is the result of the inner attitude of man. The wisdom is to follow the nature in which old age and death are irrevocable. Cicero looked at the problem of old age from the perspective of an old man who had survived his life and could pass on his message to others.

Weapons against the old age is consciousness well-being of life, intellectual interests and continuous exercise themselves in virtue. Cicero presents four disadvantages and origins of old age:

- old age is considered unhappiness, because it receding the man away from active life,
- makes that body is physically unable,
- deprives sense pleasure,
- brings closer man to death.

The Ciceronian Katon overthrows all these accusations of old age, demonstrating that he serves fellow citizens with advice, mind and experience – old council. *Lack of prudence is a feature of youth, common sense comes with age. Respect for people is an ornament of old age. Neither gray hair nor wrinkles will cause people to start suddenly respect us. The mature fruit of human respect seems only a lifetime of reasonable* (Ciceron 1995, p. 43). It can be said that the fruit of old age is the memory and abundance of accumulated merit and experience passed on to the next generations.

Galen (130–210 r. n.), as the most prominent reformer and physician, organized exercises of healing gymnastics, and through the physical nature of constancy he preached unity to the processes of growth and twilight of man (Kałamacka 2003, p. 27). Our body is growing, aging, weakening and dying. Galen believed that old age was not a disease, emphasizing that older people need the same amount of physical exercise as young people, but their intensity should be less (Wilk 1985, p. 12). In addition, after exercising for massage, bathing and eating, they should sleep – these are privileges for the elderly. Ancient Rome broadcast dignity to the old.

In the field of medicine and hygiene in the Middle Ages, the physician played an important role: Awicenna (980–1037 AD), who presented the issues of hygiene of housing, clothing and nutrition in the *The Canon of Medicine*. He was a proponent

of physical exercise in the treatment and prophylaxis of the elderly, advising them moderate exercise. He showed the possibility of developing diseases through soil and drinking water.

In Europe, in the Middle Ages, hygiene has disappeared. Religious point of view: Asceticism, habits and hygienic lifestyles, so developed in Greece and Rome failed. *Palestrica diaboli negotium* – bodily exercises are the work of the devil (Osterloff 1976, p. 64), these were the words of Tertullian (160–220 AD), the so-called African father of the Church. His writings were ascetical - ethical content and his negative views on science and reason and on human nature. He condemned everything bodily, he saw only the material and the sensuous being; There was nothing in the body (Tatarkiewicz 1988, p. 190). This has led to the development of serious epidemics: plague, typhus, cholera and others. The average life expectancy was very low, about 20–23 years, and in England in the 14th century it was even 17–20 years.

Progress in the field of hygiene has been modest, we can talk about the regression of the theory and practice of hygiene. St. Augustine (354–430) as a saint and Doctor of the Church, played an important role in the development of modern thought, has designated six periods in human life: cradle, childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood and old age – the last one starting around the sixties year. St. Augustine found signs of wisdom in the old man (gray hair), and also manifestations of sin (skin flaccid), the virtue counted for him, not the age. Old age in itself, imperfect, not necessarily bring wisdom.

The old man who turned into a human wreck should think of his salvation, he was a symbol of the vanity of the earthly world and repulsive ugliness, as well as the image of sin (old age and sickness), lived in misery, ugliness and suffering. St. Augustine argued that *physical exercise is the wheel in which the devil stands*. He appealed to *exercitio sacro* - holiest spiritual exercises (Głuszek et al. 1976, p. 290).

Improving living and hygiene in the Age of Enlightenment fostered progress in science and medicine. Great contribution of the Commission for National Education in Poland and teaching in health. Commission law recommended personal hygiene and hardening of the body, but they were not implemented in life, because the rakish gentry preferred feasting and hunting from other forms of activity.

In the eighteenth century doctors did not know much about old age. There was gratitude, tenderness and respect for old people; It was a time of cordiality for the family and the society: good old people, grandmas reading fairy tales, old people were not saints, or mythical grumblers, we were just starting to like them, and with this sympathy old age became more important (Bois 1996, p. 183).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a development and a revival in the field of hygiene issues *Utopia* and Tomasso Campanella (1568–1639) *The City of the Sun* contributed to the discussion of general hygiene. In the eighteenth century the work of Bernardin Ramazzini (1633–1714) *About the illnesses of craftsmen* and Christophe W. Hufeland (1762–1836) was published *The macrobiotic as the art of*

extending human life. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Johann Peter Frank (1745–1821) in the *General Medical Police System* presented new ideas and directions of action, particularly important for human hygiene, on the threshold of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, emphasizing that the primitive man, which was closer to nature, was more healthy and happy, and life in cities made him less resistant to illness, less healthily and less happy.

In the development of hygiene and medicine in the nineteenth century, epidemics that threatened life and health of humans were of great importance, requiring them to be remedied; new research methods, physical, chemical and microbiological methods were introduced for this purpose – Max von Pettenkofer (1818–1901) Named hygiene father who drew attention to the environment in which a person lives (Korczak 1982, p. 24). He contributed to the development of the scientific basis of environmental hygiene. Joseph Pasteur (1822–1895), Joseph Lister (1827–1912) and Robert Koch (1843–1910), developed the bacteriological development of the bacterium, and led to the explanation of the role of germs in infectious diseases and the development of epidemiology, as well as the ways and means of the spread of germs in the human body.

The development of hygiene, hygiene and family medicine encouraged the use of toilet cleaners, hygiene nutritionists - nutritionists and orderly lifestyles. The physician, who cares about his patients, recommends physical exercise, travel, air change, spa and sanatoria. Water cure developed thanks to the Silesian peasant Wincenty Priessnitz (1799–1851). It has given rise to the development of hydrotherapy and balneology, to this day in many countries the word “shower” comes from its name and means shower. Jędrzej Śniadecki (1768–1838) introduced in Poland in the 19th century new methods of physical education, recommending physical exercises in the form of treatment.

Physical activity at the end of the 19th century served as organized movement of the health as a factor to compensate for many hours of work. Around the densely populated cities, attention was paid to the balance in creating areas for games, play, walks, ice rinks and bathing areas, which were also used by older people. An interesting phenomenon was the recreation of outdoor recreation, he was modeled on the United States and created in Krakow the park dr. Henryk Jordan (1842–1907). This project aimed to promote physical activity among adults in Cracow. In the Czech Republic (1862), the *Sokol*² Gymnastic Association was established. It was to be a physical education organization, educating the physical strength of the liberation struggle, whose membership was about 100,000. Its founder was Miroslav Tyrš (1832–1884) – the manager, ideologist, and also Jindrich Fügner, patron of this association, active doing fencing and rowing.

The body of the association was the *Sokol* script. The association developed in the Polish lands in Galicia in Lviv in 1867 as the Gymnastic Society, and in 1869 it adopted the name in accordance with the Statutes of the *Sokol* Gymnastic Society, which aimed at nurturing gymnastics, hygiene and educational in the field of physical culture. As a form

2 Falcon [ZS].

of physical activity, it initiated a gymnastic movement that involved also adults (Orlewicz-Musiał 2007, p. 4). He provided health, joy, physical development, morally and spiritually. This organization has become very popular for all people, dealing with hygiene education, printing publications, brochures, calendars, songbooks, health and exercise magazines that reached the elderly. Sokół has contributed to the development of physical culture in Poland, through gymnastics and outdoor activities (Kalamacka 1997, p. 46).

This organization is still active today in Sokół Senior Clubs, seniors thanks to gymnastics remain efficiency for a longer period of time, characterized by spontaneity, temperament and humor.

Both in Poland and in Europe in the 19th century brought great changes in all areas of life. The progress achieved in medicine and physical culture has had a huge impact on the interest in therapeutic gymnastics and other therapies. Europe did not like older people, but the aging of the population was a problem of the 19th century.

This has prompted many observers to draw conclusions for the future: that health and efficiency are useful values from which we can enjoy pleasure and serene of old age. The rise in the number of elderly people and their prolonged life, acceptance of old age, have contributed to the study of physicians, nursing and treatment. Old age was the image of the whole course of life, the dream of every human being. Cheerful aging was a reward for life in which a man should prepare himself through a hygienic, temperate way of life.

The nineteenth century was the period when the elders exercised their rule, were priests, were the leaders of nations, and the symbolic value of old age was respected. Thanks to medicine, it has become a natural phenomenon, aimed at explaining the process of aging, recognizing and curing old age.

The novelty of the twentieth century was the spread of physical activity, attention was paid to appearance, state of mind and body – to feel good in his skin.

Occured struggle with old age, and in order to delay the irreversible effects of aging, with old age, it was necessary to take care of hygiene, nutrition and physical culture as well as cosmetology. Clinics have been created offering miraculous rejuvenation treatments, surgical procedures, lifting – to look young, reject old age; Care for the body and health. Appeared new nursing homes for seniors. Very important for the doctors was the good of the elderly and to enable them to be calm old age through rehabilitation and mobility (Duby 2000, p. 111).

In modern times, family plays an important role in the lives of older people; as A.A. Zych (1995, p. 57) writes: *older people can convey to young people the difficult life experience gained, the wisdom of the past*, while the young can give older people the joy and optimism to live. *Old age is the luggage of many experiences, thoughts*. Youth is hope of the future, *young people facing the future want to live differently than parents and grandparents, do not want to make the same mistakes*. Seniors and juniors are mutually necessary for each other, this position includes the intergenerational bonds of family life, grandparents and grandmothers are life teachers, wise educators and carers.

The older generation needs a close, young man who expects warmth and concern, and through telling stories can give him the wisdom of survived years.

Conclusions

According to A. A. Zych (1995, p. 85), the highest value, valued by old people, is health; With age, the health of seniors is deteriorating. From the needs of an aging person such as *peace, family, happiness, friendship, love and attachment, kindness and goodness*, security, care and support, family is the greatest element of social identity. The task of every person is to prolong the period of physical activity, to maintain health, to shift old age to later, because each person is aging uniquely and individually.

One of the most important qualities of life at the turn of the old age is activity, which is the basis of good health and well-being (Żukowska 2012, p. 91). *Physical activity and longevity go together hand in hand*, actively optimistic look at the world, it's connected with mental health. Aging is very complex, because aging is a natural process, so do not fight with old age, you should prepare for it. Physical activity decreases the rate of aging, *one must live optimistically and humanistically, be human and live in a dignified way, and respect the others* – the idea of respect for man is derived from the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

The aging man should seek the solution of the purpose and the meaning of life, while old age should be considered as another vital task to be accomplished. *Life is only one and unrepeatable, too precious to destroy them mindlessly*, so you must live creatively, learn at every age of difficult art of life and create the art of living and live it in value way *so that old age becomes dignity and not a social burden* (Zych 1995, p. 130). A man who is over his adulthood must count on the fact that he will lose health every year, and his fitness and mental condition will be greatly reduced, he may run out of a life partner, family, home, what is involved with loneliness and dependency for others. Because be human means voluntarily giving something to the existence of another person, while respecting his pain and suffering and helping, when possible in overcoming this suffering.

Seniors should be calm, free from anxiety, old age, should occupy honorable place in society, care and respect for which they deserved through the work of life; *old man has the right to life* (Zych 1995, p. 130). Physical culture is *the care of the psyche of the body* – as the Polish philosopher Władysław Tatarkiewicz wrote (1886–1980), it is a feature of human life, through physical activity conditions the health, life, development and permanently efficient senior man. Motion is a medicine that does not cost anything.

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