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Health education and teleinformatics

PUBLIC HEALTH – HEALTH EDUCATION

Public health is the domain of knowledge dynamically developing in highly industrialized countries. This is connected with the development of civilization, social life and science as well as the appearance of new health endangering factors in human population. The main tasks of public health encompass among others: monitoring of the health state of the population and the identification of the environmental risk factors, health promotion, welfare education and disease, disability prevention. All these tasks should be based on a firm program framework, the key element of which is full, truthful and topical information. The development of the primary health care, which should be the most important element of the support system for the general public in their improvement in health resulted in the extension of the tasks of public health domain. The very essential areas of interaction in public health are those that aim at ensuring efficient and easily accessed health system policy for every patient.

In the process of reforming of the primary health care, the significance of health promotion and disease prevention seems to be much more significant than the actual treatment. The main interactive tool in the process of health promotion and prophylaxis is health education. Health education according to Smith is the total sum of all impact factors, which determine knowledge, convictions and behaviour as far as health propagating, cultivating, and convalescence of the individuals and the society goes (5, 6). The definition quoted points out that health education is the process in which we provide knowledge to man, we shape the attitudes and aid the skills of making the right choices and undertaking proper decisions about health. This process depends on many interactive techniques influencing the change of behaviour of the individual and the group such as: providing information, persuasion for motivating or the interaction with the society and creating conditions for change (5, 6).

The basis of every educational process is, among others, the exchange of information. In the process of health education, the exchange of information takes place among the educated person, the society and the educator. The exchange of information allows learning about the level of knowledge concerning health and describing the expectations, interests, motivations and the abilities of the person, verifications of the methods, forms and activities applied in education (10). "Educating" depends on constructing programs for health education and their implementing in key groups for shaping health model in a given society (2). Identification of the so-called "key groups" allows choosing proper, new tools that in turn allow wide and effective "measurable" health education. One of these tools is the Internet.

TELEINFORMATICS AND HEALTH EDUCATION

In the recent years, the development of teleinformatics caused that the Internet services in Poland have become more and more popular. According to statistical reports elaborated by the American consulting firm – Network Wizards, it is Poland where the growth of the Internet popularity has been most remarkable among other east European countries (4). Computer network access, and the access to the world wide web of the Internet means the arrival of new possibilities. The first of such possibilities is the quick access to the collected storages of information created by the individuals in the whole world in many branches or domains of human knowledge. These data may exist under different forms: electronic post, WWW pages, thematic discussion groups, interactive discussion channels (Chat lines), files with photographs, video on FTP servers, P2P (peer to peer) files or the Direct connect service. Internet services allow easy and fast use of the information data. The second advantage is a quick communication with any Net user. The most important characteristics of the Internet is its two-direction operation mode, which not only creates the possibilities of exchange and obtaining information but also allows to publish it without greater financial aids. In Poland WWW pages are viewed by 91.55 of the Internet users. The so-called “surfing people” spend 3.53 hours monthly on viewing the pages. Internet users claim that their main motive responsible for their activity in the net is to obtain information that is useful at work or school (83%) and to develop their own interests and hobbies (64%) (4). These data show that the Internet has become one of the main sources of information, the workplace as well as the source of entertainment.

More and more often we can encounter the notion of “e-health” in relation to medical services realized by the use of the Internet. “E-health” means all forms of realization of the services in health care by accessing the educational and commercial information, as well as special services directed to health professionals, patients and members of the society (3).

Through taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the modern information and communication technologies one can: improve the access, effectiveness and accuracy of the tasks of the health care system by: information support, tutorials and educating, emotional support, aiding self-reliance in evaluating one’s health potential, exchange of experiences, consultations; improve the quality of educational services; conduct health counselling; evaluate the effectiveness of the educational programs conducted; lower the costs of health care system.

Summing up, one can say that the development of teleinformatics should help development of the interdisciplinary standards and technical, clinical, educational procedures and allow to improve the availability, effectiveness and health promotion in the sphere of prophylaxis and health promotion. Using teleinformatic systems may also add to the lowering of the costs of functioning of the health care system.

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SUMMARY

In the course of the last years, the development of teleinformatics caused that the Internet services have become more and more popular. The Internet means reaching new possibilities, which are provided by fast, easy and two-direction access to the required information. These features make the Internet one of the most important tools applied in health education increasing the knowledge, skill and motivation of an individual for health self-care.

Edukacja zdrowotna a teleinformatyka

W ciągu ostatnich lat rozwój teleinformatyki sprawił, że coraz większym zainteresowaniem w Polsce cieszą się usługi funkcjonujące w ramach sieci Internet. Dostęp do globalnej sieci Internetu oznacza dostęp do wielu nowych możliwości. Internet umożliwia szybki, łatwy i dwukierunkowy dostęp do każdej informacji. Cechy te sprawiają, iż Internet jako element systemu teleinformatycznego może stać się jednym z narzędzi stosowanych w edukacji zdrowotnej i przyczynić się do podniesienia poziomu wiedzy, umiejętności i motywacji człowieka do dbania o własne zdrowie.