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*Two-shift work versus selected elements  
of health behaviour of nurses*

Health behaviour consists of all activities or lack of activities which directly or indirectly influence health or general feeling of a man (4). Contemporary studies of pro-health and anti-health behaviour are quite widely and intensely testified in hitherto existing worldly and national literature (6). One can distinguish pro-health behaviour, conducive to health, such as rational diet, rest, maintaining good mutual relations between people or managing stress, and anti-health behaviour such as stimulants (alcohol, cigarettes) or narcotics (3). Health behaviour is shaped in the process of interaction between very broadly understood life conditions and individual patterns of behaviour determined by cultural factors and personal features of an individual (7,8).

The aim of this work was to study selected elements of pro-health behaviour of nurses working in a two-shift system.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted among 100 randomly selected nurses working in a two-shift system in conservative and treatment departments of the Provincial Specialised Hospital in Biała Podlaska. The study was conducted in June 2003 on the basis of the author's survey questionnaire, which was anonymous and voluntary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the results showed that in the studied group of 100 nurses, 64 of them lived in the city and 46 in the country. The studied nurses were aged between 28 and 46. The largest group consisted of 59 nurses aged between 30 and 40, the second group consisted of 39 nurses over 40, and the smallest group consisted of 2 nurses below 30.

The nurse profession is a profession of high-risk, connected with constant stress (5). Stress is a dynamic reaction between man and environment and its occurrence is finally determined by a subjective opinion of a person being in a stressful situation (2). A difficult situation means the lack of mutual adjustment of needs, conditions and activities, which is often experienced by nurses in their work (6). 59% of nurses experience difficult and irritating situations very often, 19% – often, 14% rarely and 8% do not experience such situations. The most frequent cause of stress (69%) was work, then family (14%), health (9%) and political situation in the country (8%).

The collected material allowed to ascertain that nurses most frequently experience difficult and stressful situations connected with specificity of their work and additionally, they fear losing the job (3). It appeared that 45% of nurses did not always manage stress, 42% admitted that they managed unaided in stressful situations and 13% stated that they were having serious problems with managing a difficult situation.

Most frequently nurses were coping with stress by talking to a close friend. A similarly important technique was a walk – 12%, listening to music – 11%, stimulants (cigarettes, alcohol) and sedatives – 9% of the studied.

As it appears from scientific research, one of the factors conditioning the source of stress is the circadian rhythm disturbance, which occurs in two-shift work. The most burdened are nurses working during nightly hours when mental efficiency is lowered, there is often little concentration, fatigue and the possibility of making a mistake is greater (9). Two-shift work has a negative influence on health behaviour of nurses, the fact being realised by them, but in spite of that most of them work in this system more willingly (1).

80% of nurses work in a two-shift system whereas 20% do not. In the group of nurses working in a two-shift system, as many as 96.3% of the studied are satisfied with it and 3.7% are not.

From further analysis it results that nurses want to work in a two-shift system, and the motives for making such a decision are: a long distance to work – 31.3%, the necessity of looking after a child – 15%, additional job – 8.7%. The greatest percentage of the studied nurses claimed that this system makes it easier for them to fulfil family duties. In the opinion of a large percentage of the studied (63.7%), work in a two-shift system has a negative influence on health. 6.3% of nurses pointed to a positive influence of two-shift work and 30% of nurses declined giving an answer to such a question.

From the opinion of the studied nurses it appears that two-shift work induces their irregular nutrition – 46.2%, more frequent usage of stimulants such as strong coffee, strong tea – 56.3% and greater stress – 33.8%. Changes connected with a reform in the Health Service and economic situation of the country increased the importance of securing workplaces for nurses (1).

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In the opinion of the nurses a two-shift work has a negative influence on the health behaviour and is the cause of irregular nutrition, greater amount of drunken strong coffee and tea and the occurrence of greater stress at work.

2. Stress is an inseparable element of nurses' work.

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## SUMMARY

The aim of this work was to study selected elements of pro-health behaviour of nurses working in a two-shift system. The study was carried out among 100 nurses. From the analysis of the study it appears that two-shift work has a negative influence on the health behaviour of nurses. Nurses claim that stress is an inseparable element of their job and that they try to find a way out of a difficult situation on their own.

#### Praca w systemie dwuzmianowym a wybrane elementy zachowań zdrowotnych pielęgniarek

Celem pracy było poznanie wybranych elementów zachowań zdrowotnych pielęgniarek pracujących w systemie dwuzmianowym. Badania przeprowadzono wśród stu pielęgniarek. Z analizy badań wynika, że praca w systemie dwuzmianowym ma negatywny wpływ na zachowania zdrowotne pielęgniarek. Uważają, że stres jest nieodłącznym elementem ich pracy zawodowej i starają się samodzielnie szukać wyjścia z sytuacji trudnej.