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Resolution
International Scientific Conference
“Aging and Physical Activity: Application to Fitness, Sport and Health”
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Participants of the International Scientific Conference organized under the auspices of the International Association of Sport Kinetics and with the support of the Committee of Rehabilitation, Physical Culture and Social Integration of the Polish Academy of Sciences adopt this resolution with a deep conviction about the growing medical, economic, and social challenges associated with the aging of the population in Poland and throughout the world.

It is estimated that within the next 25 years the total number of people over 60 years will grow from 605 million in 2000 to 1.2 billion in 2025. Today, in many developed and developing countries there are more people aged 60-years and older than children below 15 years. Polish society is also growing older rapidly. According to the forecasts of demographers, by the year 2020 there will be approximately 2 million additional retired persons (women over 60 years, men over 65 years). By 2030 every fourth Pole will be a pensioner.

An increasing number of older persons will almost inevitably lead to an increase in expenses associated with social security and health care. Many countries throughout Western Europe are already experiencing the economic and social challenges associated with the aging of the population. It is clear that there is a need to focus our attention on the preservation of health and independence in old age. The promotion of regular physical activity will play an important role in the development of a healthy aging strategy.

People not only want to live longer, they also want to maintain independence and high quality of life for as long as possible. 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. 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. Promoting physical activity among seniors may also help to give more meaning to life in old age.

It is estimated that if our society were physically active at or above recommended levels (30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week), the number of premature deaths could be lowered by at least 25%. Sedentary living among older adults is thought to be as dangerous as hypertension, smoking, obesity or elevated levels of cholesterol. Importantly, research suggests that physical activity is also cost effective with much greater savings in health and social care costs than expenses incurred providing activity programs.

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 optimise the degree to which they are capable of participating in work and social events. Promoting healthy and active lifestyles will enable society to better benefit from the wealth of experiences and wisdom possessed by seniors.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The aging of society mandates a continuing commitment to scientific research related to aging and older persons. There is a particular need for increased research on topics related to the role of physical activity in the promotion of health and well-being in old age.
2. There is a need for more research relating to the specific type, intensity and volume of physical activity necessary to ensure health, functional independence, and quality of life in old age.
3. Government officials and local authorities should be educated about the central role that physical activity plays in maintaining health and independence for older adults.
4. Local communities have a responsibility to assist older persons to be physically active. In addition to providing access to physical activity programs, it is also important to ensure that older people have many opportunities to build physical activity into their everyday lives.
5. Universities and colleges should place a greater emphasis on educating students about the importance of physical activity for older persons. Particular attention should be paid to preparing future generations of researchers and health professionals to help meet the needs of older persons.
6. Physical educators, health professionals, and others with expertise in healthy aging will need to work together to develop a cohesive national strategy to promote active aging.