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*Benefits of practising sport by the disabled – an example  
of a blind person*

Every stage of human lives brings new needs which people try to satisfy. Disease and disability usually limit the possibilities to fulfil the fundamental needs of an individual, which may result in numerous unpleasant consequences such as depravity or frustration; in extreme cases leading to complete withdrawal of the disabled from social life. The disease-related limited possibilities to satisfy desires and aspirations have destructive effects on the general health condition of an individual (4).

One of the ways to improve the lives of the disabled is to find a field in which they could achieve success. Striving for success is thought to be a constant need of the individual, which is particularly evident in difficult situations (6). Sport for the disabled is the area of activity which enables them to improve their physical efficiency needed in everyday life and creates possibilities of competing with others thus providing possibilities of satisfying natural human needs of success (1).

The aim of the study is to show benefits of practising sport by the disabled using an example of a blind person.

The sport for disabled is divided into groups. The blind and those with very poor sight belong to group B (entirely blind). This group consists of three sport classes: • Class B1 – completely blind who do not recognize objects or their contours irrespective of the direction or distance • Class B2 – individuals recognizing objects or their contours, visual acuity up to 2/60 or limited visual field by 5 degrees • Class B3 – individuals with visual acuity ranging from 2/60 to 6/60 or limited visual field by 5 to 20 degrees.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

An interview with a blind person was conducted. The patient Zdzisław K. was born on 28 November 1957 in Rozkopaczew in the Lublin province. At the age of 4 after influenza he had acute meningitis which caused a severe sight defect, speech disorders and 45% hypoacusia. After military service he was diagnosed with the progressive Usher syndrome manifesting itself in pigmentary retinal degeneration, pigmentosis symptoms and myopia associated with significant narrowing of the visual field.

## SPORT IN THE LIFE OF Z. K.

Zdzisław K. started his adventure with sport in the elementary school playing football and taking part in school races. Sports competition was his ticket to the school community; he writes about it: “it gave me great satisfaction, it was a mental and physical boost and I felt healthy”.

In the secondary school he took part in numerous school competitions, including successful 2,000-metre races in which he was third twice. At the age of 15 he started taking part in regional competitions, e.g. 10,000- and 5,000-metre street races (in one of them he was third). Having completed his secondary school he took up work in the Lorry Factory in Lublin. His professional duties made his further sports career impossible. Three years later he was recruited to the army where he restarted his trainings with success and was rewarded for sports achievements.

Due to his deteriorating health condition his military service was shortened and he gave up competitive sport. Later he took up work in the Invalid Cooperative “Link”, in which he continued his athletics trainings yet had no possibilities to take part in sports meetings. Further progression of the disease and substantial deterioration of sight made him stop working and he was on a disability pension. Despite the fact that the progressing disease decreased his efficiency and self-dependence, Z.K. did not give up sport completely. He remembers that at that time his friends, who became his guides in athletics, helped him. He remained in good physical condition thanks to participation in races, which allowed him to take up work in the blind cooperative in Lublin.

The professional work and contacts with the blind community developed his sports interests. He took up goalball, which is the game played with a sound ball weighing 1.25 kg whose size is similar to that in basketball (for the blind and those with partial vision loss). The team consists of 6 players (3 playing and 3 substitutes) whose eyes are covered with special goggles. The game is played on the 18x9 m pitch which is divided into three parts: attack, defense and neuter. The pitch is marked with lines and 1.5 mm strings (3).

In 1992 the responder became a member of the team of the “Start Lublin Club of Integration Sports and Rehabilitation, in which he is still playing. The physical condition achieved during his school years enabled his successes in the invalid sport. With his team he took the fourth, then second and first place in the Polish championship in goalball. In 1995 Zdzisław K. joined the national team. He took part in several Europe championships in which he won silver and bronze medals (5).

Moreover, Z.K. has achieved great success in long-distance street races and short-distance stadium races at the regional and national level. In the Polish Athletics Championship, he took part in 800-, 1,500-, 5,000- and 10,000-metre races. His biggest achievements include: 2' 24" 13, 4' 54" 02, 18' 52" 86 and 38' 56" 42, respectively. His collection of medals is impressive – 19 gold, 8 silver and 3 bronze ones. His long-distance results are also worth stressing: 1 h 26' 03" in half-marathon, 2 h 57' 16" in marathon and 7 h 22' in the 4-stage race. His dreams of taking part in Para-Olympic games in Atlanta did not come true because the Club did not find a guide for him.

At present, Zdzisław K. focuses on goalball and he treats races only as recreation. He admits that lack of understanding of his Olympic aspirations discouraged him from further athletics practising. Nevertheless, he claims that sports competitions gave him strength to fight with the disease and disability. Practising sport enabled him to accept his disability and have an active social life.

## CONCLUSIONS

The example of Zdzisław K. demonstrates that: 1) physical activity enables the disabled to decrease the disease- and disability-related consequences, both somatic and psychosocial ones; 2) sport allows the disabled to satisfy their needs of success and affiliation, to have social contacts and to reduce the inferiority complex; 3) institutional support of aims and aspirations of the disabled is indispensable.

## REFERENCES

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## SUMMARY

A disease and disability usually result in limited possibilities of fulfilling the fundamental needs of an individual. Sport is a field of activity which enables the disabled higher physical efficiency necessary for everyday life and provides possibilities of competing with others, including the possibilities of fulfilling the need of success existing in every human being. The study presents the advantages of sport on the basis of a case of a blind person.

Korzyści z uprawiania sportu przez osoby niepełnosprawne na przykładzie osoby niewidomej

Choroba i niepełnosprawność zazwyczaj powodują ograniczenie możliwości zaspokojenia fundamentalnych potrzeb jednostki. Sport jest dla osób niepełnosprawnych obszarem aktywności, który pozwala nie tylko na uzyskanie większej sprawności fizycznej potrzebnej w codziennej egzystencji, ale także daje możliwość rywalizacji z innymi, a tym samym stwarza możliwości zaspokojenia drżemającej w każdym człowieku potrzeby sukcesu. W pracy pokazano korzyści z uprawiania sportu przez osoby niepełnosprawne na przykładzie osoby niewidomej.