



## **The Organizer of Sports and Recreational Events as Health Educator**

**Paweł Fryderyk Nowak<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*Sports and recreational events can be a carrier of many general educational values. They may promote sport rivalry and they can also educate towards a healthy lifestyle. Much depends on the event program and mission organizer. The aim of the study was to determine the attitude of the organizers of sports and recreational mass events (with sport rivalry) toward health promotion and to study the intentional enter in the role of health educators. The study involved 160 sports and recreation events organizers operating in Poland. The method of a diagnostic survey was used as a technique of author's anonymous questionnaire. Programs of 50 most popular sports and recreational events in Poland were analyzed in terms of objectives and content of educational events. Promoting health and healthy lifestyle is the most significant aim for the organizers; creating a meeting place for participants of specific sports activities and promoting a city (or village) where the event takes place are also important. Most of the organizers claim that activities of health education and offering preventive treatment during the event enrich the event significantly. Unfortunately, declarations and goals related to health promotion noted in events' programs are not reflected in the detailed program of the event. Sports and recreational events like city running have a great potential in the field of health promotion, but organizers only occasionally plan specific educational activities in the field of healthy lifestyle and seldom offer the ability to perform free preventive care.*

### **1. Introduction**

Health education is carried out in different forms. This is a task for many public institutions (schools, institutions, facility health, and local government units) as well as private companies that join in educational activities within the framework of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). For them health education is a tool in shaping the image of the company, strengthening its brand [1].

Sports and recreational events may carry many general educational values. They may promote sport rivalry and they can also educate towards a healthy lifestyle. Much depends on the event program and mission organizer [2].

In Poland in recent years a dynamic growth of sports and recreation events organization can be observed, mainly of city running. A new fashion for a healthy and active life is promoted [3]. However, health promotion often gives way to promote sporting ambitions - to maximize efficiency in a specific sports discipline [4]. There also can be significant transformations in the field of education observed. The knowledge about health, healthy lifestyle Poles acquire mainly from the mass media [5, 6]. The health education in new media has very often a commercial connotation characteristic for the contemporary culture of mass consumption. Despite huge amount of information in an increasingly interactive media, a sense of chaos and problems with the quality of information and its sources is perceived [7]. Health-related events are one of a form of universal health education. Formerly this form was criticized for its one-off, indexicality and thus low efficiency of long-term impact. However, it is worth noting that modern cyclic mass events supported by the electronic media can be an effective instrument in promoting health education, because it is a real meeting of people involved in practical activities, which are accompanied by emotions [8, 9].

The aim of the study was to determine the attitude of the organizers of sports and recreational mass events (with sport rivalry) toward health promotion and to study the intentional enter in the role of health educators.

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy, Opole University of Technology, Poland



## 2. Material and methods

The study involved 160 sports and recreation events organizers operating in Poland. The majority (86%) are the organizers of running events. While recruiting to the study the purposeful selection was used recruiting only the organizers who realize cyclical events. The method of a diagnostic survey was used as a technique of author's anonymous questionnaire. A diagnostic survey method was used as a technique of author's anonymous survey questionnaire. All questions were closed, the subjects' task was to sort the response in the corresponding hierarch of the importance or to answer on a 1-5 point scale. Programs of 50 most popular sports and recreational events in Poland were analyzed in terms of objectives and content of educational events.

Collected material was statistically analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel 2016 spreadsheet and program Statistica 12. For the correlations study between variables Spearman correlation was used. To assess the significance of differences between variables non-parametric test U Mann-Whitney was used. In analysis as important accepted effects, was the value for which the probability was lower than the accepted level of significance of 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## 3. Analysis of results

Respondents are in most originators of organized activities (69.4%), we can also stand out only a group of contractors implementing the specific objectives of a public body or a commercial company (30.6%). Among the objectives relevant to the organizers first in declarations appears to promote health and healthy lifestyles, in the next: to create a meeting place to lovers of a specific activity. Also appears a promotion of the region, the village; the possibility of collecting funds for important social goal; brand promotion of the sponsor; other objects and in last place, the organizers have indicated a desire for profit. From a practical point of view, the important thing is if the organizer is the originator or only the performer of someone else's idea of the event. Presumably, that translates to a bigger identification with the objectives of the event and a greater personal involvement in program activities. However, research shows that it does not differentiate the approach to declared objectives of the event, only in the case of creating a meeting place for fans of a particular activity, the statistically significant difference ( $Z = -2.694$ ,  $p < 0.007$ ) was found. This goal is more important for the originators than to contractors.

Respondents (40%) admit that the organization of their event mainly financially support public institutions. For a complete lack of funds support from public sources complain about 10% of the organizers. Organizers admit that it is difficult to seek financial means from other, non-public sources. As many as 47.5% claims that no commercial entity provides them with financial support. Only 12% of events are mainly supported by commercial companies. The grant is usually associated with the implementation of the objectives of donors. A slight correlation between financial support from public institutions and the pursuit for the promotion of the region, city ( $r_s = 0.163$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) was calculated.

The quality of the event depends on the amount of its budget, which at the reception of participants is boiled down to a package of gifts, gadgets for each active participant. Respondents declare that for them important is to post information to promote the region in starter kits i.e.: publishing municipal tourist information points (39.4%), for 13.1% of the respondents it is very important. Free preventive care, i.e. blood pressure test, spirometry, etc. are undoubtedly a variety of starter kits enrichment. For 45% of the organizers it is important to offer each participant some examinations, and for 20.6% it is very important. The packages may also have an educational function. They may contain important information, brochures such as handbook. For 43.8% of participants such kit is important and for a 35.2% it is very important.

Firstly responded organizers would like to be seen as popularisers of a healthy lifestyle, secondly as popularisers of sport, and thirdly as popularisers of venue of the event.

The perception of itself as a promoter of healthy lifestyle shows a statistically significant correlation relationship with the objective of the event which is the promotion of health ( $r_s = 0.366$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and a negative relationship with the desire to make profits by organizing events ( $r_s = -0.215$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Being a promoter of health is associated with offering health-related preventive treatment starter kits ( $r_s = 0.219$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and educational materials ( $r_s = 0.330$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The negative correlation with popularizing a particular sport ( $r_s = -0.687$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and popularizing the venue ( $r_s = -0.260$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) was showed.

An analysis of the rules of the biggest sports and recreation events organized in Poland shows that in almost every case, the organizers write goals that relate to health, a healthy lifestyle, but in all



programs there is a domination of the typically sport objectives. Tasks of a health education programs are a marginal component of sports and recreation events where a sports rivalry appears.

#### 4. Conclusions

The organizers are leaders who have a great untapped potential in the field of health education. The research shows that they are aware of it and they understand the need to promote not only a sport activity but also the general principles of a healthy lifestyle.

The most important goal for organizers is to promote health and a healthy lifestyle. It is also important to create a meeting place for enthusiasts - to participants of particular sports activities.

For 79% respondents distribution of educational materials about health during the event is important. The organizers would like to be seen as popularizers of a healthy lifestyle and this fact negatively correlates with the objectives of sports events, which they organize.

Most of the organizers claim that activities of health education and offering preventive treatment during the event enrich the event significantly. For them health is a value. Unfortunately, declarations and goals related to health promotion noted in events' programs are not reflected in the detailed program of the event. Very often health-related goals included in the form of catchphrases are designed only to win the favor of institutions which grant such events.

More engagement from the organizers of mass sports and recreation events in activities in the area of health education should be expected, not only during the event, but also both before it begins and after the end, i.e. through online social media. Sport recreation events i.e. city running even though they have a great potential in the field of health promotion not only in the educational activities in relation to active participants, but also their family environment, fans - the audience participating in the event, as well as outside observers.

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