

Editorial

Health-enhancing physical activity in Europe and in Switzerland: the health care setting and beyond

Five years ago the Swiss Journal for Sports Medicine and Sports Traumatology already had a thematic issue on physical activity and health which was mainly dealing with the situation and work done in Switzerland (Martin et Mäder, 2009). The current one has more of an international perspective. The occasion for most of the contributions was the Expert Meeting on “Physical Activity Promotion in Health Care Settings” organised at the University of Zurich with the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organisation WHO in November 2013. Its first purpose was to provide an overview of the current state and ongoing developments in the field and most of the articles presented here have originated from presentations given during the expert meeting. The Nordic Countries and the United Kingdom have been the front runners in the development of physical activity promotion in health care. The articles by Raustorp and by Ward are providing an overview about the current situation in Sweden and in Wales respectively. But developments are underway in other countries as well: Germany, Slovenia, Russia and also Switzerland are covered in the contributions by Fücéki, Djomba, Potemkina and Martin. As Zurich was the first ever WHO expert meeting on this topic on a global scale, there were also participants and contributors from overseas. Lobelo gives an overview of the activities of the global “Exercise is Medicine” initiative pioneered by the American College of Sports Medicine, and Duperly covers the specific experiences in Latin America. The second purpose of the meeting was to identify lessons learned and remaining challenges, so the results of the meeting could “provide the basis for the definition of priorities for future action in the European region”. In the final discussion, the more than 50 international experts agreed on the “Zurich Declaration” outlining the further development in this field (table 1).

“Physical Activity Promotion in Health Care Settings” will also be the main topic of the 10th annual meeting and the 5th Conference of HEPA Europe, the European network for health enhancing physical activity taking place at the University of Zurich on 27 to 29 August 2014. The event will have the patronage of several international and national organisations including the Swiss Society for Sports Medicine. The article by Martin-Diener highlights the contributions from Switzerland and other countries which have made it possible for HEPA Europe to play an important role in the development of physical activity promotion on our continent over the last decade. Kahlmeier in her contribution gives an overview of the other organisations active in this field.

Our article on the situation in Switzerland not only presents our national approach PAPRICA (Physical Activity Promotion in PRImary Care), but also gives a short overview of the current overall situation concerning physical activity in our country. This provides the opportunity for reflection on pro-

gress in physical activity in Switzerland over the last few years – also in view of recent comparative research between European countries (Bull et al, in press). Switzerland continues to have good conditions and a strong tradition of active transport to school as well as of walking, both for commuting purposes and as a leisure time activity. Sport for all has strong structures including the role of sport clubs and associations, the national Youth and Sports programme and physical education in schools. The latest data on physical activity still suffers from the same methodological limitations already described five years ago (Martin et al, 2009), but the developments at least in adults’ behavioural patterns are encouraging. This is probably an expression of the many promotional activities at the level of the communities and the cantons as well as within private organisations, and of favourable developments particularly in urban planning and transport. The over-

Table 1: The “Zurich Declaration on Physical Activity Promotion in Health Care Settings“ developed at the first ever WHO Expert Meeting on this topic in November 2013. The complete and final wording of the declaration can be found in the final official meeting report.

1. Physical activity promotion in health care settings should be put in the context of overall physical activity promotion and its different evidence-based approaches
2. Stewardship for physical activity promotion in health care settings lies with the health sector, and at the international level with WHO
3. Physical activity promotion in health care settings deals with the complete spectrum of physical activity, from the reduction of sedentary behaviour over activities in daily life and exercise to sport for all, and includes physical activity for primary prevention, therapy and rehabilitation
4. All health professions should be integrated and develop their potential and opportunities in physical activity promotion in health care settings
5. Physical activity promotion in health care settings should be integrated and supported in national physical activity policies, strategies and programme structures
6. Drawing from national and international experiences and targeted research, the evidence base for physical activity promotion in health care settings should be improved and specific guidance developed

all assessment of the developments concerning the national sport and health sectors is less optimistic. The Swiss Federal Government's Concept for a National Sport Policy in the year 2000 had defined "more physically active people" as its first objective and also the Federal Law on Sports Promotion revised in 2011 provides a good basis for activities in this field. However, when the draft ordinances regulating the implementation of the law were presented, they contained only very limited elements in this direction. Therefore, during the consultation process the Swiss Society for Sports Medicine, Public Health Switzerland, the Swiss Medical Association and several other related organisations made a number of comments and recommendations with respect to population reach activities in children and in adults, external evaluation and accountability. None of these recommendations were integrated in the final ordinances (Martin et al, 2014).

After WHO's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health was published in 2004, the Swiss Federal Government commissioned the development of a national programme in this field. It is in place since 2008, but still today it does not have measurable objectives. Following a critical evaluation report (von Stokar et al, 2011), an analysis was commissioned and resulted in recommendations for developments within the federal administration (Lamprecht et al, 2013). Our own analysis of physical activity promotion in Switzerland (Martin et al, 2014) for the national "NGO Alli-

ance Diet, Physical Activity, Body Weight" identified deficits at three levels: lack of leadership and direction at the national level, lack of stewardship and accountability in implementation, lack of critical evaluation and research. Specific recommendations for the NGO Alliance were made with respect to the development of targets for physical activity promotion, to the development of an alliance of committed institutions and to capacity building.

The process for the development of a national strategy for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases NCDs has just begun in Switzerland. NGOs and professional organisations such as Public Health Switzerland, the Swiss Society for Sports Medicine and the Swiss Medical Association have an important role in assuring that such processes do not only result in the multiplication of administrative structures and of coordination efforts, but in targeted action, accountability for the use of public funding, and in the facilitation of critical research according to international standards. Evidence based measures delivered through professional structures play an important role in the fight against NCDs – such as physical activity promotion in health care settings.

Brian W. Martin, MD MPH
Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine
University of Zurich

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Corresponding author:

Brian Martin, MD MPH, Head Physical Activity and Health Unit, Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine University of Zurich, Seilergraben 49, Room D-03 CH-8001 Zurich, Telephone: +41 44 634 45 57 E-Mail: brian.martin@uzh.ch