

ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation addresses the issue of health among the Polish population. The primary objective was to explore the scope of lay knowledge regarding health, with particular emphasis on the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. This aspect was assessed using the method of social diagnosis, based on original research allowing for the evaluation of health status, lifestyle, and cognitive gaps within a segment of the Polish population. The motivation behind this research stems from a public health concern related to the widespread incidence of cardiovascular diseases in Poland. Nearly 40% of all annual deaths in the country are attributed to such conditions. The conducted studies revealed that the health status and lifestyle of respondents reflect an insufficient level of health-related knowledge. Identified knowledge gaps among Poles pertain to a lack of understanding of fundamental health concepts, unawareness of health risk factors, and a limited recognition of the influence of lifestyle choices. The health knowledge possessed by the respondents is general, fragmented, unsophisticated, and often outdated. Moreover, it does not consistently translate into everyday practices or coherent reasoning. The majority of Poles maintain an unbalanced diet, eat irregularly, engage in insufficient physical activity, exhibit susceptibility to addictions and pharmaceutical overuse, and rarely participate in preventive health screenings. Poles are largely unaware of the harmful effects not only of risky behaviors but also of various other lifestyle-related factors on their health. This indicates a need for broader knowledge about diseases—especially cardiovascular conditions—and the mechanisms underlying their development, communicated in accessible and memorable language. The findings underscore the urgent need for more intensive and effective health education in Poland, supported by innovative strategies, as existing approaches have proven inadequate.

Keywords: knowledge, lay knowledge, health, lifestyle, disease, cardiovascular diseases, CVD, health education