

ACTIVE LIFE STYLE IN SENIOR AGE - HOW TO LIVE HEALTHILY AND WISELY – LONGEVITY IN A GOOD EUROPEAN STYLE

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Abstract

The aim of the presented study is to analyse and evaluate the significance of the lifelong contribution of prof. Jan Ślężyński for the support of active lifestyle in senior age, especially how he copes with the difficult aspects of old age - how to live healthily and wisely in a context of health support and wellness in European style. The partial goal is to capture autobiographical attributes in the context of the chosen topic. Methods as: Case study method; Content analysis; Hysteresis; Descriptive analysis were applied. Regular physical activity in senior age prevents atrophy of muscle as well as muscle strength and cardiorespiratory function. The risk of premature death with a change from a sedentary lifestyle to a physically active life is a prerequisite for a long and healthy life. During the active life style promoting human health through properly applied movement, prof. Jan Ślężyński represents the importance of an active lifestyle in senior age as a prerequisite for a long and healthy life.

Keywords

Elderly; Physical Activities; Sport for seniors; Rehabilitation; Jan Ślężyński; Wellness.

INTRODUCTION

Senium represents a period studied by the field of geriatrics. The word is semantically derived from Greek, where “gerón” means “old” man and “iatró” means “healing”. Geriatrics focuses primarily on the issue of health and functional status of seniors. In general, it deals with the quality of human life in the period of hayloft. In general, physiological aging is characterized by two factors. On the one hand, it is presented a decrease in vitality and on the other hand, it is a decrease in resistance, when the susceptibility to various diseases may increase in seniors. Rokyta et al. (2015) describe aging as a complex biological process manifesting at the molecular, cellular and organ levels. From the point

of view of medicine, the aging process itself is considered to be a progressive, inevitable and irreversible process, although it is not objectively caused by injury or illness. Physicians define aging as a combination of clinical symptoms in general, i.e., progressive adverse loss of adaptability, increased frailty, decreased vitality, increased risk of disease, and progressive structural organic, degenerative changes. Furthermore, Rokyta et al (2015) didactically define the following main problems of old age as the so-called “Five I”:

- Instability
- Immobility
- Intellectual damage

- Incontinence
- Iatrogenic damage

If we compile knowledge about aging and old age from various clinical disciplines of human medicine, we come to the information that aging is based on both genetic information and the acquired external and internal influences. Every person has a certain performance genetically given (Máček, Radvanský et al., 2011). Physiological aging is a universal process that begins in the third decade. Inter-individually, aging is at different speeds, but basically the same for all people. Intra-individual differences stem from the recognition that in an aging body, a particular tissue or organ (or system) ages at its own rate — independently of other organs (Krejčí et al 2020).

There are a number of theories of aging in biomedicine, none of which have yet fully explained the multifactorial process of aging, such as the "Mitochondrial Theory" of aging; "Theory of the Negative Effect of Free Oxygen Radical Accumulation", which is widely discussed worldwide, and "Neuroendocrine Theory" linking neurophysiology with endocrinology and organic biochemistry. A somewhat simplistic explanation for the aging of the human body is the finding that cells of the aging human body differ from the young human body by slow mitosis, slow basal metabolism, slow biochemical intracellular processes, increased cytokine production and not entirely physiologically acting intracellular proteins, reduced receptor sensitivity, decreased antioxidant protection (Jandová 2020).

The World Health Organization described the quality of life as the individual's sense of cultural position and value system in which he lives in relation to his

achievements, expectations, standards and interests (Hajat, Stein, 2018). According to the authors, the assessment of the quality of life was considered in a subjective dimension and it was the result of evaluating various spheres of life in the context of life as a whole.

Thus, it could be seen that the quality of life assessment includes the degree of satisfaction with life in terms of needs and the possibilities of their implementation. It depended on the individual value system and the degree of satisfaction in such areas as: sense of health, family life, spending free time, education, housing conditions and general standard of living (Klimaszewska, Krajewska-Kułak, Kondzior, Kowalczyk, Jankowiak, 2011; Rehor, 2002).

The quality of life depends on the state of health - health related quality of life (HRQL) and covers four areas: mobility, somatic state, mental and social condition. It assumes that the quality of life assessment depends on health. The worse our health is, the worse our quality of life is (Post, 2014).

The quality of life of seniors is significantly affected by the reduction in the level of vitality and physical functioning, and the functioning of social life, regardless of the gender of the respondents (Bolach, B., Stępień-Słodkowska, Bolach E, Kornatovska, 2020).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY, HYPOTHESES

The aim of the presented study is to analyze and evaluate the significance of the lifelong contribution of prof. Jan Ślężyński for the support of active lifestyle in senior age, especially how he copes with the difficult aspects of old age - how to live healthily and wisely in a context of

health support and wellness in European style. The partial goal is to capture autobiographical attributes in the context of the chosen topic.

Based on the chosen goal, a hypotheses was created.

Hypotheses: The work of prof. Jan Ślężyński is of exemplary importance for the development of an active lifestyle in senior age.

METHODS

Characteristics of the examined person

The life profile of the professor Jan Ślężyński in points:

- Prof. dr hab. Jan Ślężyński was born on 27th April 1931, in Poland in Gródek Jagielloński, to a peasant family. His education started in Gródek in 1937 and continued, after the liberation of Poland, in Żary and Jawor where he received a high-school diploma in 1951.
- In 1958 he obtained bachelor' degree from The Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw and in 1959 master's degree from The Academy of Physical Education in Wrocław. During studies he also specialized in physical rehabilitation. After graduation, he acquired additional qualifications: yacht skipper and sailing instructor, ski instructor and figure skating instructor. He was the director of approximately 50 summer and winter camps, not only for the Academy students but also for disabled persons.
- He received his Ph.D. in 1969, from The Academy of Physical Education

in Wrocław for his dissertation „The characteristic of somatic features and physical fitness in female primary school teachers in Dolny Śląsk” (doctoral supervisor Prof. Dr Adam Wanke – the author of popular somatic typology AHVI).

- The degree of Habilitated Doctor in Physical Culture Sciences was conferred on him in 1983 by AWF Warsaw for positively evaluated scientific achievements and his habilitation thesis „Somatic feature changes in former athletes”.
- Habilitation of Jan Ślężyński during the inauguration of 1983/1984 academic year at The Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw proceeded by the president of the university prof. dr Tadeusz Ulatowski
- The scientific title of the Full Professorship was granted to him by the President of Poland in 1993. The nomination was handed over by the legendary leader of “Solidarność” in Belweder, see Fig. 1.

Figure 1 The President of Poland Lech Wałęsa giving the scientific title of the Full Professorship to Jan Ślężyński on 29th November 1993, in Belweder



- In Katowice Academy Professor Jan Ślężyński was employed in the following positions: adjunct (1971-1974), docent (1974-1982), nominated docent after the habilitation (1983-1991), associate professor (1991-1995) and full professor (1995-2015).
- In the years 2001-2014, at his alma mater, he was the president of 14 habilitations and 7 professorial dissertations and also reviewer of scientific works for the scientific degrees of habilitated doctor or the professor title.
- Parallel with his scientific and

didactic work he served responsible academic functions: president of The Physical Education Training Department (1973-1975), vice director and director of The Sport and Physical Education Institute (1976-1977 and 1977-1980), associate dean (1981-1984), vice-rector (1987-1990), the dean (1999-2002). He was also the president of The Movement Rehabilitation Department (1985-1992) and The Department of Physical Education Theory and Methodology (1992-2002).

Figure 2 2 Prof. Jan Ślężyński as vice-rector (1987-1990) and dean (1999-2002) in the University school of Physical Education in Katowice



- Professor's activity in the Physical Education Department is also recognized and honored as a member of The Physical Higher Education Council (1985-1987), member of Department Commission of Science Structure (academic year 1988/89) and member of the Physical Education Section of the Higher Education General Council (1993-1996).
- In 2001 he experienced an interesting episode in his public life. Polish Popular Party remembered his peasant origin and proposed his candidacy as a deputy to Polish Parliament.
- Since the year 2003 till now, he has been fully dedicated to the active lifestyle of seniors, see the section "Results".

Professor has two children: daughter Ilona (1970) and son Radosław (1980)

and is also proud of his granddaughter Marzena, a graduate of physical education and corrective-gymnastic therapy at AWF Katowice (she graduated master education with distinction in 2013, and presently is a distinguished student of doctoral studies with 23 publications (Górna-Łukasik (2010); Górna-Łukasik, Ślężyńska (2016)).

Methods and procedure

The research survey was divided into three overlapping periods:

1. Search all available information in libraries, archives and on the Internet.
2. Establishing contact with the examined person, interviews, consultations.
3. Interviews with contemporary witnesses, search for historical context.

Case study method

The basic method is the case study method, which generally deals with the description of individual interesting and unusual cases. The case study approach is qualitative, trying to capture as many variables as possible with the aim of deep knowledge of the individual case.

Content analysis

The content analysis was based on the processing of a large amount obtained material, to evaluate and compare the interpreted text and to subsequent conclusions. Information obtained from studies in the Polish professional literature was used to interpret the results on the lifelong contribution of the researched person. The photos were obtained from the private sources of the professor Jan Ślężyński.

Hysteresis

The hysteresis method took into account historical facts with regard to the purpose of the study.

Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis simplified the complexity of the collected data and obtained it in the general overview of the analyzed issues. Essential information has been singled out and interpreted in the text. Using a deductive approach based on theory, with the help of logical reasoning and already established facts, research was carried out and causal relationships between variables were revealed. The inductive approach worked mainly with qualitative data. The collection of these data led to the acquisition of final

views on the issue and to the conclusion of a general conclusion. With the help of exploration, the final collection of all data was carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scientific interests of prof. Jan Ślężyński

Professor's scientific interests are focused on man's motor involution, diagnostics and correcting faulty posture in children and teenagers, physical and motor development of disabled persons. He is the author or co-author of over 230 scientific publications in prestigious polish and foreign journals, conference and congress materials and scientific monographs.

By accomplishing his scientific research he was able to gather around him a competent circle of co-workers not only from his alma mater, but also from other scientific centers, as for 15 years (1976-1990) he held the position of coordinator of the central research programs of 2nd degree: Department Problem 101, Nodal Problem 10.7, and The Central Program of Fundamental Research 08.16.

Scientific research triggered some constructive ideas. The professor is the author of three patented measurement devices, which are implemented in scientific research: used for spine mobility measurements in sagittal, coronal, and transverse planes with pelvis stabilization (patent no. 105042), for plantographical footprints with non-marking technique (patent no. 105242) and for foot arch measurement (utility model no. 61307), see Fig. 3.

Figure 3 The device invented by prof. Jan Ślężyński for measurements of the spine mobility in sagittal, coronal and transverse planes with pelvis stabilization (patent no. 105042)



The professor was a tireless initiator and organizer of numerous conferences and congresses, also international, including three European conferences in Cracow “Sport as a chance for disabled people” (1996), “Sport in rehabilitation of disabled people” (1999) and “Perspectives of creating equal opportunities” (2002). He was also an editor of conference materials, printed in English and Polish version under the auspices of The Polish Association of Disabled People.

In the years 1990-2011, Professor was the main organizer of the cyclical conferences at his alma mater. Their reminiscences were edited by him and then published: “Theoretical and practical aspects of human physical activity” (PTNKF and AWF Katowice 1996, 1997, 2000) and “The effects of physical education” (PTNKF and AWF Katowice 1996, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2011).

As a consequence of the Professor’s scientific and editorial activity was his

membership in 8 scientific associations, including two international ones (Biometric Society, Sport Kinetics). However, the closest bound he had with The Polish Society of Physical Culture Sciences (PTNKF), as for 25 years (1984-2009) he performed the elective function of the chairman of the PTNKF Silesian Department. He was awarded the honorary membership in the Society in 2005, by the decision of the PTNKF General Assembly. For 8 years he held the function of the chairman of Polish Association of Disabled People in Cracow (1995-2003), and was also given the dignity of the Honorary Member.

Professor has been continuously supporting the development of young research workers, proved by the promotion of 16 doctors in physical culture (two of the dissertations were awarded), see Fig. 4.

Figure 4 Prof. Jan Ślężyński promoting dr. Krzysztof Wilusz during the inauguration of 2008/2009 academic year at Academy of Physical Education in Katowice – ten-time Polish champion in tumbling (acrobatics), the 26-time medalist of European and World Championships and World Cups



Some of the Professor's additional social functions worth to mention: the counselor of AWF „Trojak” Song and Dance Ensemble (1983-1993) and the chairman of AZS-AWF Club (1993-1996) – as they were linked to Academy of Physical Education in Katowice students' outstanding achievements both in the country and abroad.

Professor was honored with numerous state awards, regional and departmental

prizes, among which were bronze and golden Cross of Merit (1955 and 1974), silver and golden decoration of The Meritorious Activist of Physical Culture (1972 and 1975) The Medal of Merit for National Defense (1976), The Medal Of the National Education Commission (1976) and also The Knight's Cross (1986) and The Officer's Cross (2000) The Order Polonia Restituta (Fig. 5), (Wiśniewska, Ślężyńska, Ślężyński 2015).

Figure 5 Important state and departmental decorations awarded to prof. Jan Ślężyński with The Knight's Cross and the Order Polonia Restituta



In 2001, Professor received The Minister of Education Award for outstanding scientific and didactic achievements. In 2006, to acknowledge his outstanding scientific achievements, Professor entered The Golden Book of Polish

Science – The Scientists of the United Europe, edited by The Polish Biography Institute (Fig. 6).

Figure 6 Professor Jan Ślężyński entered The Golden Book of Polish Science – The Scientists of the United Europe, edited by The Polish Biography Institute



Sport and active life style interests of prof. Jan Ślężyński

The professor maintains contacts with many friends in Poland and abroad. Legendary football trainer Antoni Piechniczek, member of the International Olympic Committee and multi medalist Irena Szewińska, great Polish sport representatives Robert Korzeniowski and Justyna Kowalczyk - Academy of Physical Education in Katowice graduates, are among them (Fig. 7).

Figure 7 Prof. Jan Ślężyński visiting a football trainer Antoni Piechniczek in Wisła (July, 2000)



Having the extensive knowledge of the importance of physical activity in a man's life, Professor constantly takes care of his physical fitness by systematic swimming, skiing, sailing, skating, also roller-skating or ski-skating and cycling.

Regular hygiene to improve blood supply to the skin is also important: brushing head, face, stomach, torso, back and limbs, exercising hands with "spike" ball and systematic, performed at home, exercises such as everyday hand stands with 2,5 kg weights around ankles and skipping rope jumping with weights.

In 2001, Professor, being 70 years old, performed the record number of 201 hand stands in 23 minutes and entered the Guinness Book of Record 2003. He also holds the certificate of Polish record when, as an 80 year old, he performed 211 hand stands in 27 minutes and 20 seconds. Professor possesses significant sport swimming achievements – a discipline especially recommended for seniors (Fig. 8, 9, Fig. 10).

Figure 8 Prof. Jan Ślężyński during Masters Swimming Championships in June 2017 in Warsaw in the category 85-89 years won 8 medals-three gold and 5 Silver (on the left), in August 2017 during the World Swimming Masters Championships in Budapest in the category 85-89 he won 3 medals for 5 Kowolik spots



Figure 9 and 10 Prof. Jan Ślężyński setting the Guinness record with 211 hand stands in 23 minutes (November, 2001) (on the left), the winner of three medals during Polish Masters Swimming Championships, Cracow, 2013, category 80-84 years: gold in 1500 m freestyle, silver in 200 m freestyle and two bronze medals in 400 m freestyle and in 200 m classic (on the right)



In April 2015, during „Ekiden” Marathon Swimming at Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Professor set a peculiar mega record – at the age of 84 he swam non-stop 116 pool lengths (25 m) which is 2900 m in 90 minutes and 10 seconds. In April 2016, during „Ekiden” Marathon Swimming at Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Professor set a peculiar mega record – at the age of 85 he swam non-stop 120 pool lengths (25 m) which is 3000 m in 109 minutes and 55 seconds (Maszczak 2011a; Maszczak, 2011b).

In the years 2010-2018 Professor held 40 open author meetings under the motto

„How to live wisely and healthy – longevity in a good European style”. During the meetings he demonstrates that even in the advanced age, it is possible to be intellectually and physically fit and tells how to slow down the involution changes (Table 1), (Olkowski, 2011; Szczepański 2010, 2011, 2013).

In the years 2012-2019, he took part in Polish Championships Masters in swimming and won 65 medals including: 26 gold, 35 silver and 4 bronze (Table 1) (Kowolik, 2011).

Tab. 8 Jan Ślężyński's most important achievements in swimming 80-84 and 85-89 years category (Notice: *Polish record)

Competition	City, year	Sport competition	Result	Place	Medal
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Katowice 2012	400 m freestyle	10:50,88	I	gold
		800 m freestyle	22:44,91	II	silver
		200 m freestyle	5:19,77	III	bronze
		200 m classic	5:39,72	I	gold
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Kraków 2013	1500 m freestyle	44:50,33*	I	gold
		400 m freestyle	10:46,77	III	bronze
		200 m freestyle	5:03,23	II	silver
		200 m classic	5:23,08	III	bronze
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Katowice 2014	1500 m freestyle	45:14,39	I	gold
		200 m freestyle	5:19,06	II	silver
		200 m classic	5:34,62	II	silver
Polish Cup Masters	Tychy 2015	200 m freestyle	5:08,06	I	–
		100 m freestyle	2:21,32	I	–
		200 m classic	5:32,31	I	–
		100 m classic	2:38,33	I	–
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Szczecin 2015	1500 m freestyle	47:39,65	I	gold
		400 m freestyle	11:49,51	II	silver
		200 m freestyle	5:46,06	II	silver
		200 m classic	5:56,24	II	silver
		100 m classic	2:47,13	II	silver
		100 m classic	2:42,45	II	silver
Polish Cup Masters	Racibórz 2015	200 m freestyle	5:14,11	I	–
		100 m freestyle	2:24,87	I	–
		200 m classic	5:41,41	I	–
		100 m classic	2:37,28	I	–
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Gliwice 2015	1500 m freestyle	45:14,51	I	gold
		400 m freestyle	10:56,63	I	gold
		200 m freestyle	5:10,56	I	gold
		200 m classic	5:35,77	I	gold
		100 m freestyle	2:17,47	I	gold
		100 m classic	2:38,73	I	gold
		50 m freestyle	1:01,22	II	silver
		50 m classic	1:11,01	II	silver
Polish Cup Masters	Warszawa 2015	400 m freestyle	11:12,36	I	–
		100 m freestyle	2:29,20	I	–
		200 m classic	5:52,45	I	–
		100 m classic	2:41,94	I	–
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Gliwice 2016	1500 m freestyle	47:50,02	I	gold
		400 m freestyle	11:34,80	I	gold
		200 m freestyle	5:36,64	I	gold
		200 m classic	5:58,40	I	gold
		100 m freestyle	2:30,73	II	silver
		100 m classic	2:49,59	II	silver
		50 m freestyle	1:06,34	II	silver
		50 m classic	1:10,23	II	silver
World Masters Championships	Budapest (Hungary) 2017	400 m freestyle	10:21,59	V	grey
		200 m classic	5:52,27	V	grey
		100 m classic	2:43,66	V	grey
		50 m classic	1:08,57	X	–
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Warszawa 2017	1500 m freestyle	44:33,69*	I	gold
		400 m freestyle	11:09,60	I	gold
		200 m classic	6:14,21	I	gold
		200 m freestyle	5:15,41	II	silver
		100 m freestyle	2:32,20	II	silver
		100 m classic	2:52,70	II	silver
		50 m freestyle	58,48	II	silver
		50 m classic	73,73	II	silver
Open Polish Swimming Masters	Olsztyn 2018	1500 m freestyle	45:22,06	I	gold
		400 m freestyle	11:15,79	I	gold
		200 m classic	6:09,53	I	gold
		200 m freestyle	5:30,69	II	silver
		100 m freestyle	2:29,96	II	silver
		100 m classic	2:53,15	II	silver

CONCLUSION

The hypotheses: "The work of prof. Jan Ślężyński is of exemplary importance for the development of an active lifestyle in senior age" was verified.

During his life, filled with hard work in the field of promoting human health through properly applied movement, prof. Jan Ślężyński dozens of professional books. Some are published repeatedly and in the practice of active lifestyle of seniors they prove to be excellent and applied in Poland and abroad. They are one of the significant benefits attesting to the reach and seriousness of the work of prof. Jan Ślężyński for health and wellness support. They contain a detailed description of compensatory exercises for various health problems.

In terms of continuity with an active lifestyle, swimming, gymnastics, body-posture exercises, hiking and other physical activities are an integral part of his life. He does not take movement only as a sports component, but considers it primarily as a component to improve the functional system, because he is aware that physical and mental health are maintained through movement.

Based on the analysis of his work, the following recommendations can be made valid for active seniors and seniors with disabilities:

- Exercise regularly, perform exercises accurately, correctly and to extreme positions.
- Perform all exercises consciously with proper breathing.
- Prefer exercise in nature and in the fresh air.
- Remember to exercise a good mood and appropriate motivation when exercising.

The main motto of prof. Jan Ślężyński is the motto: "What matters is not the years you add to your life, but the life that you add to your years."

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