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HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE AS ONE OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE STATE YOUTH POLICY IN UKRAINE

ABSTRACT

The study is prepared at the Department of International Information of Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University.

The paper describes the healthcare system in Ukraine. The basic legal documents that relate directly to this issue are considered. The main health threats for Ukrainian youth are defined. Some of the social programs and projects related to healthy lifestyle of Ukrainian youth are examined.

Key words:

youth, health care system, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction

1. Formulation of the scientific problem and its significance

Health is generally recognized as an evaluative characteristic of humanity. The concern for its population health is one of the indicators of the state civilization. According to the UN General Assembly resolution *Global Health and Foreign*

Policy: Strategic Opportunities and challenges (Draft 3.2; May 11, 2009) the state of population health is the main criterion of the feasibility and effectiveness of all spheres of economic activity.

In the middle of the 20th century, the *Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO)* defined the concept of health as a state of complete physical, mental (spiritual), and social well being, not just the absence of disease or physical disabilities. Therefore, health is viewed not only as a resource, but also as the purpose of life¹.

The health and well being of young people is a key issue not only for the youth, but also for the whole society in general, because most adult diseases are the result of living conditions during childhood and youth. Representatives of various organizations, institutions, and civil society as a whole recognize that some health threats have much bigger influence on young people than on other social groups.

European countries maintain a policy aimed at supporting and improving their citizens' health, especially the youth. The attraction of young people to taking decisions regarding their health and physical well being is one of the conditions for successful implementation this policy.

The right to be healthy is recognized in international conventions and charters. Therefore, all young people, regardless of their economic status, political views, ethnic or religious affiliation, place of residence, sexual orientation, marital status, gender, and other characteristics have the right to healthcare and social security. In Ukraine, during the time of the demographic crisis, the preservation of the population's health, as well as healthcare reform, has to become a priority of the country's domestic policy.

2. Analysis of the recent research on the present issue

Many domestic scholars dedicated their work to the issue of young people health care. For example, V. Chornenka analyzed the medical and biological aspects of the formation of students' awareness about the real dangers of HIV/AIDS. V. Skorokhod and T. Skorokhod considered the problem of the formation of a youth health culture through education. In their scientific works, V. Ulizko and M. Selezinka drew attention to the problem of the formation of the physical culture and valeological beliefs of students in order to maintain and strengthen health. I. Ivanova

¹ *Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO)*, http://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf [access: 10.03.2013].

and M. Neizvestny devoted their works to the problem of the development of the psychological and emotional stability of the youth as a guarantee to prevent AIDS, drug abuse, and addictions. The problem of the mental health of HIV-infected and AIDS patients is considered in the works of S. Strashko, L. Levitska, and G. Guseva. I. Shyshova researches the psychological influences on the formation of students' mental health. G. Jaworska worked on the use of American experience of motivation of youth for healthy lifestyle and HIV/AIDS prevention. The problem of the individual values and sexual behavior of students is examined in the work of I. Haletska. O. Yezhova and I. Kalynychenko research the level of students' awareness with the problem of reproductive health. All in all, a large number of professional scientists' work is devoted to the problem of health care and maintaining the physical well being of the nation. However, Ukrainian scientists make some omission in this issue and that's why we think it's appropriate to devote this article to the present problem.

The purpose of the article is to analyze Ukrainian youth health care. The following tasks are assigned to achieve the goal: 1) to examine the health care system in Ukraine, and 2) to determine the main problems concerning the health of young people.

3. The main research

3.1. System of Healthcare in Ukraine

Today, the healthcare system is completely subordinate to the state. According to the Regulation on the Ministry of Healthcare of Ukraine (approved by the President of Ukraine Order since April 13, 2011 No. 467/2011), the Ministry of Health of Ukraine is the central body of executive power that is directed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Ukraine's Ministry of Health operates in accordance with the constitution and laws of Ukraine, directives issued by the President of Ukraine and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, other legislative acts of Ukraine and the Orders of the President of Ukraine².

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine attempted start reforms several times, but the healthcare system still keeps the structure of N. Semashko's model

² План діяльності Міністерства охорони здоров'я України на 2013 рік та два бюджетні періоди, що настають за плановим (2014–2015 роки) [Plan of the Ministry of Healthcare of Ukraine on 2013 and Two Budget Periods Following the Planned (2014–2015)], http://moz.gov.ua/docfiles/plan_dial_2013.pdf [access: 18.03.2013].

(the soviet model) with the following feature: state funding of the healthcare system on the basis of general taxing with government services system³.

Like in many other countries, the structure of healthcare in Ukraine has three main levels:

1. National (represented by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the state healthcare institutions directly subordinate to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine).
2. Regional (represented by the Ministry of Health of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea; departments of health at regional administrations; state healthcare institutions, which are assigned to them according to the proper decisions of higher authorities; healthcare establishments that are jointly owned by local communities).
3. Sub-regional (local) level of the healthcare system is represented by regional administrations, district, city, city districts, village and rural local bodies of self-governments, and healthcare institutions that are subordinate to these bodies on communal rights⁴.

3.2. The system of „youth medicine”

The first priority of the *Draft of the Strategy of State Youth Policy Development in Ukraine until 2020* is “equal and free access of young people to qualitative education and training”.

The second priority is “the system of *youth medicine* and the project *youth health*”. This document envisages that the creation of an effective model of youth medicine requires providing young people with equal access to medical services of a primary character and the promotion of healthful lifestyle and sports training of youth by the state.

The tasks are to be implemented through the following ways:

- development and implementation of the national program of youth healthcare based on the concept of youth medicine with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS, alcohol, tobacco and drug addiction, etc.;

³ В. Лехан, *Стратегія розвитку системи охорони здоров'я: український вимір* [The Development Strategy of the Healthcare System: Ukrainian Dimension], Газета Новості медицини и фармації Психіатрія (383) 2011 (тематический номер), http://www.mif-ua.com/archive/article_print/20562 [access: 13.03.2013].

⁴ Е. Лібанова, *Молодь та молодіжна політика в Україні: соціально-демографічні аспекти* [Youth and Youth Policy in Ukraine: Social and Demographic Aspects], Київ 2010.

- raising the level of material and technical basis of medical institutions for young people;
- cessation and further prohibition of mass tobacco and alcohol advertising;
- providing young people with free medical services of a primary character;
- creating and cultivating values of healthcare and healthful lifestyle, particularly through social advertising;
- improving physical training system for the formation of active physical training among young people in the system of formal education and expanding additional free opportunities for physical training in the educational system establishments;
- developing a network of free institutions of physical training for young people outside the formal education with the emphasis for youth as well as older groups;
- development of the national, sub-regional, and regional sports competitions and tournaments of mass low-cost sports for youth;
- support and implementation of programs and activities for youth involvement in physical training and the integration of sports education into the national project “Olympic Hope 2022”;
- support of the children sports system revival;
- support of the development of physical culture and sports in the countryside through the involvement of local governments and communities;
- development of a wide network of accessible playgrounds for children in all localities and recreational areas, including rest areas, beaches, etc.⁵

3.3. Social programs and projects concerning the health of Ukrainian youth

One of the leading institutions of Ukraine, which focuses its activity on the problem of youth health, is the Oleksandr Yaremenko Ukrainian Institute of Social Research, the successor of the Ukrainian Institute of Social Research. This institution is an independent scientific and research organization established by a group of Ukrainian scientists in 1991 and registered as a public organization. The projects and studies carried out by this institution are the following:

⁵ План діяльності Міністерства охорони здоров'я України на 2013 рік та два бюджетні періоди, що настають за плановим (2014–2015 роки) [Plan of the Ministry of Healthcare of Ukraine on 2013 and Two Budget Periods Following the Planned (2014–2015)], http://moz.gov.ua/docfiles/plan_dial_2013.pdf [access: 18.03.2013].

- monitoring public opinion (via nationwide monitoring of public opinion of Ukraine population);
- HBSC – international project “Health Behavior in School-Aged Children” (supported by the UN Children’s Fund in Ukraine and the WHO in Ukraine);
- ESPAD – pan-European research project “European Pool of Students as to Alcohol and Drug Usage” (supported by the UN Children’s Fund in Ukraine);
- International project “Prevention of HIV-infection Among Teenagers in Ukraine and South-Eastern Europe” (the project is implemented on request of the UN Children’s Fund in Ukraine)⁶.

Moreover, supported by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Canadian Society of Health (CSIH), the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research developed a strategy – *Youth in Favor of Health* – and its sequel – *Youth in Favor of Health – 2*. Key elements of the strategies were the following aspects:

- studying the state of youth and children health care in Ukraine;
- studying policy, aimed at promoting healthy lifestyle, both in Ukraine and other countries;
- studying mass-media effect, defining special educational programs of healthcare for youth and children of 1st–11th forms, which had been pilot tested in 18 schools in Kiev;
- compiling textbooks for teachers, students and parents, as well as manuals for headmasters and methodologists;
- preparing study course on health issues for public activists, officials and executives, involved in decision making about dissemination of the healthy lifestyle practice;
- developing medical care system, education and social services;
- forming resource center in Kiev;
- organizing youth TV studio and radio, publishing advertising and promotional as well as educational materials;
- work of speakers bureau;
- interactive theater;
- educational programs;
- trainings;
- special meetings⁷.

⁶ Український інститут соціальних досліджень імені Олександра Яременка [Oleksandr-Yaremenko Ukrainian Institute of Social Studies], <http://www.uisr.org.ua/about> [access: 13.03.2013].

⁷ »Молодь за здоров'я« українсько-канадський, Канадська агенція міжнародного розвитку, <http://www.health.gov.ua/health.nsf/5fe2200c28218b85c12567eb004d1f98/c85d7ed6bc16b5bec12567eb004da083?OpenDocument> [access: 10.03.2013].

3.4. Ukraine's legislation concerning healthcare system

Article 49 of the Constitution of Ukraine states that „Everyone has the right to health protection, medical care and health insurance. Healthcare is provided through state funding of relevant social and economic, medical and sanitary as well as healthy and preventive programs. The state creates conditions for effective and accessible healthcare for all citizens. State and community healthcare institutions provide free medical care. Moreover, existing network of such institutions cannot be reduced. The state promotes the development of medical institutions of all forms of ownership. The state cares about development of physical culture and sports, provides sanitary and epidemic welfare”⁸.

The branch mentioned above is also regulated by the following documents:

1. The Law of Ukraine “On Environmental Protection” as of June 25 1991 No. 1264-XII (November 18, 2012 version).
2. The law of Ukraine “On Combating Illegal Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors and their Misuse” as of February 15, 1995 No. 62/95-SC.
3. The law of Ukraine “On State Regulation of Production and Trade of Ethyl, Cognac and Fruit Alcohol Beverages and Tobacco” as of December 19, 1995 No. 481/95-SC (Version of January 1, 2013).
4. The law of Ukraine “On Physical Culture and Sport”, the law of Ukraine No. 17 “On the Prevention of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Social Protection of the Population”, the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 18 as of March 9, 1999 No. 341 “On AIDS and Drug Addiction in 1999–2000”.
5. The Decree of the President of Ukraine since April 27, 1999 “On Measures Regarding the Development of Spirituality, Morality Protection and Healthy Lifestyle Forming” (Amended by the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 1195/99 as of September 17, 1999).
6. The Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of October 28, 1997 No. 1171 “On Some Measures for Mass Prevention of Diseases Related to Iodine Deficiency”.
7. The Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of March 23, 1998 No. 357 “On Comprehensive Measures for Preventing Spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases”.

⁸ Конституція України: редакція від 4 лютого 2011 р. [Constitution of Ukraine amended on 4 February 2011], Київ 2011.

8. The Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of September 15, 1999 No. 1697 “On Approval of the National Program of Population Patriotic Education, Healthy Lifestyle Promotion, Spiritual Development and Strengthening Moral Foundations of the Society”.
9. The Order of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine as of May 3, 1996 No. 293 “On Rules of Tobacco Products Retail Trade Approval”.
10. The Order of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine as of August 27th, 1996 No. 503 “On Rules of Alcoholic Drinks Retail Trade Approval”.
11. The Order of the Minister of Health of Ukraine as of January 5th, 1999 No. 1 “On the Improvement of the Activity of Health Authorities and Healthcare Institutions as to the Healthy Lifestyle Forming, Hygiene Education of the Population” and others.

3.5. Financing of the healthcare system

Allocations and payments for healthcare are carried out according to strict line-item budget procedures and regulations. Most medical institutions in Ukraine belong to different levels of authority. That’s why they shoulder most costs. Although each local government is functionally subordinate to the Ministry of Health, from the view of power and finance, it is subject to the local authorities. The Ministry of Health directly finances only some services, including those related to cancer, birth control, activities related to the treatment of patients with HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis⁹.

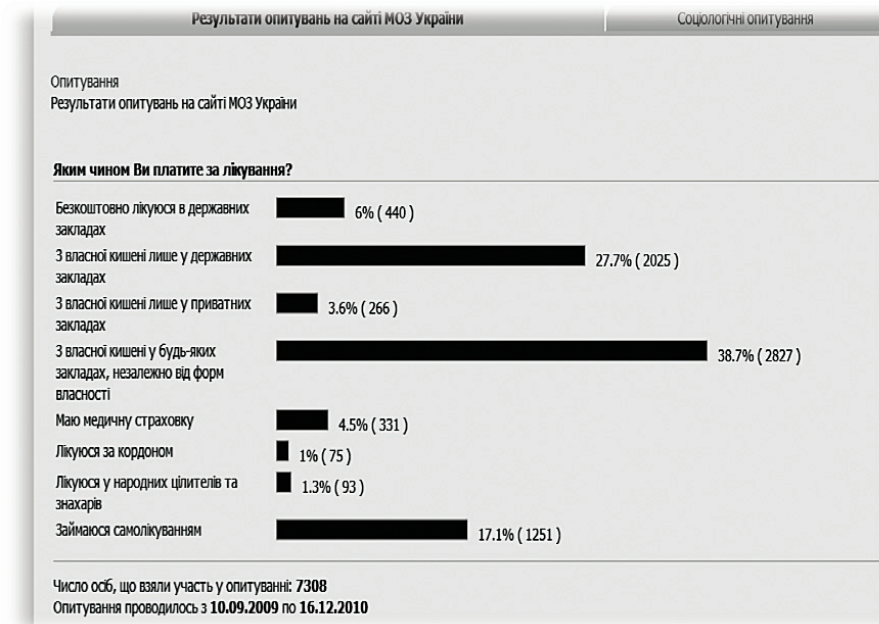
The lack of funding is distressing Ukraine’s healthcare system. As a result, state and municipal institutions are trying to raise funds, which come from charitable contributions by businesses and individuals, as well as funds of voluntary health insurance. However, the amount of these contributions is also very small. As a result, a large number of costs must be paid by the average individual Ukrainian¹⁰.

⁹ В. Лехан, *Стратегія розвитку системи охорони здоров’я: український вимір* [The Development Strategy of the Healthcare System: Ukrainian Dimension], Газета Новості медицини і фармації Психіатрія (383) 2011 (тематический номер), http://www.mif-ua.com/archive/article_print/20562 [access: 13.03.2013].

¹⁰ Н. Кузенко, *Особливості фінансування системи охорони здоров’я розвинених країн* [Features of the Financing of Health Care in Developed Countries], “Науковий вісник НЛТУ України” [Scientific Bulletin of National Forestry University of Ukraine] 2011, No 10, Vol. 21.

The sampled data on the official website of the Ukraine's Ministry of Health (Figure 1) illustrates the result of such an imperfect system.

Figure 1. The Ministry of Health of Ukraine poll as to the payment for treatment



Medical workers believe that the lack of funding for the sector is a major problem. At the same time, other experts indicate that it is not the amount of state funding that is important, but how wisely these public funds are spent. For example, I. Pokanevych, the Head of the Delegation of the World Health Organization in Ukraine, notes that by mobilizing the power on-site without considering the lack of financial resources in the regions, the central government authorities got a scattered system, unable to effectively utilize available resources as a result. Meanwhile, the private medical sector that sustained a boom in Central Europe remained in its infancy in Ukraine¹¹.

¹¹ I. Pokanevych, *Система охорони здоров'я в Україні: Не тільки розмір має значення* [The Healthcare System in Ukraine: Not Only Size Matters], http://www.kyivpost.ua/ukraine/article/sistema-ohoroni-zdorovya-v-ukrayini-ne-tilki-rozmir-maye-znachennya-32208.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+kyivpost%2Fukraine-articles+%28KyivPost.ua [access: 08.03.2013].

4. The main problems related to the health of young people

The surveys and a state report are regularly conducted by the European Union with the aim to determine the level of problems associated with the health of young people. This state report consists of the following blocks: 1) health state, 2) physical health, 3) mental health, 4) usage of hazardous substances, 5) nutrition, and 6) sexual behavior and teenage pregnancy.

Ukraine also conducts similar research, including on “Family and Children”, “Youth of Ukraine”, “Health Behavior in School-aged Children”, etc. The latest research was conducted in 2010 by the O. Yaremenko Ukrainian Institute of Social Research with the assistance of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Ukraine within the international project “Health Behavior of School-aged Children” – HBSC.

This research provided an opportunity to analyze the lifestyle of teenagers, which directly affects their health. These factors include nutrition; feeling of the body; physical activity; violence and abuse; sexual behavior; smoking, alcohol, and drug usage. Moreover, the research permitted the analyzing of the conditions that had evolved in the closest social environment of teenagers, which affected the mental, physical, spiritual, and social health of students. Defining the level of awareness of these diseases became the main task of the interrogation since Ukraine is one of the “leading” European states as to HIV/AIDS spreading¹².

The main threats, such as alcohol, drugs, smoking, obesity, HIV/AIDS, unsafe sex that leads to infectious diseases and unwanted pregnancy, are clarified with the help of the analysis of the above-mentioned research and different publications related to young people’s health. The majority (about 74%) of the younger generation (15–34 years) drink alcohol regularly, according to the “Youth of Ukraine 2010” research. Nine percent (9%) of respondents admitted that they had used drugs at least once during their lifetime. 30% of respondents said they personally knew people that were using drugs. Tobacco undermines the health of Ukrainian youth as well. 57% of male respondents and 23% of female respondents indicated that they were smokers. The tendency of increasing number of overweight people is observed in recent decades. This problem affected the Ukrainian youth. An interesting fact is that the majority of overweight respondents are men (25.8%) while the index of overweight women is 18.5%¹³.

¹² О. Балакірева, *Стан та чинники здоров’я українських підлітків* [Status and Factors of the Health of Ukrainian Teenagers], Київ 2011.

¹³ Е. Лібанова, *Молодь та молодіжна політика в Україні: соціально-демографічні аспекти* [Youth and Youth Policy in Ukraine: Social and Demographic Aspects], Київ 2010.

T. Alexandrina, the Chairman of the Ukraine Civil Service on AIDS/HIV Resistance and Other Socially Dangerous Diseases, stated „The level of infection with HIV as well as the growth of rate of HIV infection among Ukrainian youth (aged 15 to 24 years) had significantly decreased: 5 years ago it was 16%, but today it is 3.6%”¹⁴.

T. Tatarчук, the Chief Pediatric Gynecologist at Ukraine’s Ministry of Health, reported that over 3.5 thousand Ukrainian women aged 15 to 17 artificially interrupted pregnancy in 2008. At the same time, there were 101 abortions performed for girls aged younger than 14.

Doctors affirm that Ukraine is one of Europe’s leaders in the number of abortions, including teen abortions¹⁵.

5. Conclusions and recommendations for further research

Summarizing all of the above-mentioned information, we can outline some facts concerning the health of Ukraine’s youth. Firstly, the healthcare system is completely subordinate to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and is therefore centralized while its funding is decentralized. Secondly, the state has developed a profound legal framework. The primary focus of this legal framework is the protection and promotion of public health, particularly among young people, and its foundation includes article 49 of the *Constitution of Ukraine*.

It is related to the protection and promotion of public health, particularly young people, including article 49 of the Constitution of Ukraine and numerous decrees, decisions and orders of the President of the state. Thirdly, alcohol, drugs, smoking, being overweight, HIV/AIDS, unsafe sex that leads to the infectious diseases and unwished pregnancy are the main health threats for the Ukrainian youth, similar to the most countries in the world. Fourthly, a large variety of activities intended to highlight the importance of health as a major factor in a successful person’s development, and therefore the whole state, are implementing in Ukraine. The health problems of young people in Ukraine are still urgent, despite the great diversity of these measures. Therefore, , the primary goal of the country is the encouraging the younger generation to be more health conscious. It is advisable to

¹⁴ Кількість ВІЛ-інфікованої молоді в Україні скоротилася вчетверо [Number of HIV-Infected Youth in Ukraine Has Decreased Fourfold], Офіційний веб-сайт Міністерства охорони здоров’я, http://www.moz.gov.ua/ua/portal/pre_20121130_2.html [access: 10.03.2013].

¹⁵ Національна доктрина молодіжної політики [National Youth Policy Doctrine], <http://www.msms.gov.ua/sport/doccatalog/document?id=93045> [access: 13.03.2013].

continue in-depth study of this issue in order to monitor changes and output trends with further adjustments of activity, including public bodies in the area.

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