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Report
from the National Scientific Conferences in the series
“New Challenges in School Prophylaxis”
Kraków, June 12, 2015 and June 3, 2016

The professionalization of social prophylaxis successively determines actions not only in scientific research and development of new forms of education for future prophylaxis experts but also in terms of combining experience and knowledge of theoreticians and practitioners in the field of risky behavior prevention and various forms of social maladjustment in children and adolescents. The “New Challenges in School Prophylaxis” series of conferences, launched as early as 2014 at the Ignatianum Academy in Kraków, is intended to be such an ideal platform for the exchange of ideas, reflections, innovations, and concepts regarding social prophylaxis. The conferences, the main organizer of which is the Department of Social Prophylaxis and Rehabilitation of the Ignatianum Academy, with the support of the Education Board in Kraków, are intended to develop substantive and ethical standards in the perception of prophylaxis as an educational and pedagogical process and system, among others by consolidating the environments of academics, teachers, employees of educational support institutions, as well as local government, non-governmental and social activists. One of the goals of such meetings is also to provide a stimulus for local initiatives in local law and legislative initiatives covering systemic prophylaxis programs. The organizers assume that a coherent and common message, as well as consistent, possibly unanimous action aimed at preventing risky behavior in children and adolescents will have a real, positive effect.

The selection of the topics of individual conferences is based on the prior research and experience of the initiators of the meetings and the needs diagnosed

in the environments of practitioners directly responsible for the implementation of prophylaxis projects and programs. In addition, an evaluation of the conference is conducted annually, which indicates that the selection of both content and form (scientific and workshop) of the meetings meet the expectations of the participants and touch upon their most current professional problems.

The second conference in the “New Challenges in School Prophylaxis” series took place on June 12, 2015. It touched upon three topics: risky behaviors associated with psychosexual development, children’s and adolescent’s activities on the Internet, and gambling. After the official opening of the session by the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy at AIK, Krzysztof Biel, Ph.D. SJ, participants listened to a short lecture by Fr. Marek Dziewiecki, Ph.D., on the need to integrate prophylactic measures in school, which raised issues related to harmful prophylaxis and various depravers of children’s sensitivity entering the schools as self-proclaimed prophylaxists. Next, Szymon Grzelak, Ph.D., discussed the nationwide studies on groups of junior high school students, which indicated the need to integrate prophylaxis efforts. He also presented the concept of seven levers of prophylaxis, i.e. principles that seem to have a universal nature in preventive and educational environmental work. The participants confirmed their beliefs that prophylaxis as a domain of knowledge must benefit from the achievements of many fields of science and the experience of economists and employees of state administration.

Next, Agnieszka Walendzik-Ostrowska, Ph.D., precisely organized sexual behaviors that are difficult to diagnose and describe for many pedagogues. This difficulty is not only associated with the means of diagnosis but above all with the sense and knowledge of what is the norm and what is not. What was important in this presentation for the practitioners in the audience was the reference to the theory of sexology and developmental psychology.

The subsequent three presentations concerned the utterly current issue in prophylaxis regarding Internet use and gambling games. Agnieszka Duda, MA, characterized the phenomenon of gambling and defined the concepts of “gambling” and “gambling game”. She answered the question of why seemingly trivial behaviors such as playing “for prizes” or “for money”, or buying a lotto ticket in the presence of children could be harmful towards them. Ewa Sowa-Behtane, Ph.D., analyzed the problem of Facebook addiction, and Roman Solecki, MA discussed youth activity in the family, peer and school environments in correlation with online activity on the basis of his research.

The last part of the second conference regarding prophylaxis were workshops: the first one, conducted by A. Walendzik-Ostrowska, involved sexual behavior at school, its diagnosis, and perception by the pedagogical environment. The second one, conducted by Monika Borkowska-Żebrowska, MA, addressed the cooperation of schools with the Municipal Center for the Prophylaxis of Addictions (Miejskie Centrum Profilaktyki Uzależnień – MCPU) and other institutions. The third one, conducted by Tomasz Gubała, addressed the possibility of using the

“CUDER” prophylactic game in school activities, diagnosis, intervention and class integration.

The conclusion of the second edition was also an introduction to the development of the concept of the third conference. The organizers acknowledged that prophylaxis is primarily auxiliary and complementary activities – not just intervention and response when problems arise, but foreseeing and preventing them. Discussions among the participants focused on the need to emphasize the area in which the process of both education and prophylaxis would begin, i.e. family because that is where prevention starts. It begins when a family is present, when its members listen to each other, care for each other, are interested in each other, they communicate, they encourage each other’s good behavior. A strong, positive family relationship is one of the strongest factors that protect the child from problematic and dangerous behaviors constituting a challenge for the society and a threat to their health and life. What’s more, since prevention begins in the family, it is worth focusing prophylactic measures not on children and adolescents but on the family as a mutually linked system, the synergy of which can be far more important than the “individual” effort of each of its members. In relation to the above, the title of the next conference, which was held on June 3, 2016 at AIK, was chosen: “Prophylaxis for the family, the family for prophylaxis”.

The third edition of the conference was mainly devoted to scientific presentations in the main panel and two thematic panels. In the first, conducted by Ewa Gurba, Ph.D., participants discussed the fundamental topics constituting the basis for pondering on the role of the family in prophylaxis measures and its significance for education and prophylaxis. After greeting the guests and a short introduction to the issues of the session by the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy at AIK, Krzysztof Biela, Ph.D. SJ, and the initiator of the conference series, Karolina Kmiecik-Jusięga, Ph.D., the first speaker, Mariusz Jędrzejko, Ph.D., made his presentation. The presentation started with providing some alarming statistics: according to the latest research results, 20% of Polish children are raised outside a full family, and only 4.5% of Polish children live in multigenerational families, which is a huge disproportion compared to the generation of their parents and grandparents. The speaker described the current trends in education that are relevant to social prophylaxis. He also pointed to the statistics of divorces in Poland and other phenomena, both biological and developmental (e.g. temporal acceleration apparent in pediatric studies, exemplified by the fact that a 13-year-old girl looks like an 18-year-old), as well as economic (i.e. the effects of the expansion of market economy, the phenomenon of adults “buying” the submission of children, and such risky behaviors as gambling, workaholism and the phenomenon of self-organization of free time through activities in social media, games, virtual space, which are completely beyond parental control and unlimited in time). The atomization of children’s behavior is definitely a new challenge for school prophylaxis. Currently, there is an apparent tendency in the research results involving a

greater number of risky behaviors among youths than 10 years ago, and the average age of the “experimenters” is 14 years, whereas there is an “equalization” in risky behaviors being taken up by both sexes, since there is a systematic increase in risky behavior among girls.

The next speaker was Krzysztof Wojcieszek, Ph.D., who performed an interdisciplinary characterization of the relational protective factors within the family. He emphasized above all the importance of a positive family presence in education and prophylaxis, as the context of human behaviors and its multi-dimensionality should always be taken into account. The speaker pointed out that the terms and phenomena present in prophylaxis should not be taken literally. If the research results indicate a negative impact of peer relationships, it does not mean that these relationships should be avoided. He also showed the audience how important it is to look at social phenomena in an integrated manner, from different perspectives, and the amount of prophylactic content we can find in publications that seemingly have nothing to do with prophylaxis. A similar tone was present in Krzysztof Ostaszewski’s, Ph.D. presentation, who acquainted the participants of the conference in a detailed manner with the “Domowi Detektywi” (“House Detectives”) prophylaxis program, and pointed to the need for a change in the way we think about the presence of parents at school. When discussing the evaluation of the program, he referred to the concept of protective factors and risk factors in the context of family support and its participation in the lives of young people.

The subsequent speakers discussed topics related to the area of prophylactic competencies and pedagogization of parents. Father Marek Dziewiecki, Ph.D., referred to the prophylaxis expert’s relations with the family, demonstrating how they should talk to adults and how parents could be motivated to prophylactic work.

Anna Błasiak, Ph.D., focused on the concept of the family community and parents’ pedagogical culture. This term, broadly defined in pedagogical and psychological literature, is currently very trendy in training sessions and courses aimed at building parental competencies. Often, however, it is interpreted too narrowly and methodically, while it incorporates a whole spectrum of knowledge, worldview, practical skills and emotional attitudes not only of parents towards children but also of mutual relations between all the members of the family (Misiorny-Fitz 1980, p. 228).

Agnieszka Barczykowska, Ph.D., devoted her presentation to the role of the family in the process of social rehabilitation of minors. In her report, she pointed out that family is a marginalized element and is basically absent from the process of social rehabilitation of youths. The family is a fundamental area in terms of structure, parental attitudes and interpersonal relationships in the diagnosis of social maladjustment of minors. On the other hand, the family is absent from the process of therapeutic or social rehabilitation interactions planned after the diagnosis, because the interactions are centered on the youths themselves.

In American and Western European experiences, using various incarnations of *multisystemic therapy*, the family is a basic element, and all its members are covered by supportive, educational and therapeutic measures (Stańdo-Kawecka 2009, p. 162; Kuształ 2011, p. 38).

The afternoon thematic panels concerned the development of parental competencies and family prophylaxis at school and in the local environment. The first highlighted the issues of parents' soft skills and modern strategies in prophylaxis measures, focusing on the achievements of positive psychology. The research on the attitudes of mothers and fathers in families of Polish and French high school students was also discussed.

The second panel was devoted to the importance of cooperation between different educational environments in prophylactic measures at school and in the local environment. The speakers shared their experiences gained from the educational and prophylactic measures and programs they and other teams of prophylaxis experts implemented in schools and local environments. In the presentation "Counteracting Violence Against Children in Prophylactic Programs and School Procedures and Prophylactic Innovation Addressed At Parents", Małgorzata Kozak, Ph.D., presented the results of a pilot program involving the improvement of the safety of children in school and kindergarten, and offered a discussion on the problems and opportunities associated with the implementation of innovations supporting parents' educational competencies. Ewa Sowa-Behtane, Ph.D., discussed the principles and the specificity of prophylaxis work with culturally diversified families. Referring to statistical research, she pointed to the growing number of multicultural families in Małopolska, and thus she outlined the potential and already real challenges for prophylaxis in school environments regarding children from such families, and in local environments, where multicultural families are undergoing assimilation.

The practitioner speakers, Katarzyna Ciszewska and Tomasz Gubała, presented prophylactic programs simultaneously aimed at children and parents, aiming to build "healthy" interpersonal relationships between parents and children.

The organizers and connoisseurs of the conference think that in the face of the multiplication of educational, developmental and risky behavior problems in children and adolescents, such as early alcohol and drug use, sexual initiation or addictions (including behavioral ones), one should turn towards the family to reflect on its present day tasks and functions. Today, in the 21st century, in a rushing avalanche of socio-cultural and economic and political changes, it so happens that the family is no longer represented as the most important community in human existence in the various media creators of social life. The participants of the conference, not only speakers but also people actively taking part in the panel and cultural discussions, strongly emphasized the need for active participation of scientific and practitioner environments: teachers, school pedagogues, environmental prophylaxis experts and parents involved in the field of social prophylaxis.

Both of the conferences have once again become a platform for sharing the thoughts and experiences of the participants involved in risky behavior prevention, promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the well-being of children and adolescents.

Literature

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