PROBLEM OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE

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Abstract

In medical studies it is stated that it is still difficult to define health level of each particular person. Thus, modern studies try not only to give qualitative evaluation and descriptions of some phenomena but also to deduce precise mathematical laws. All measures aimed at the officials’ working conditions optimization for public administrators and the change of their lifestyle are taken to maintain health of this category of employees. These measures are associated with the application of physical education in public administrators’ labour and spare time. Taking into account the importance of this problem the Academy of Public Administration under the Aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus started a research in this field. As the Institutes of Public Service and Managerial Personnel are the organizational departments of the Academy, the Department of Physical Education is able to study the state of health of officials on different levels of public administration system. It is possible to provide qualitative and quantitative characteristics of health level and to predict person’s health development, if we find out the sum of major functional body systems as “spare capacity”. As a result of the research the list of conclusions and some recommendations are drawn in the article.

Keywords: health, officials, public administrator, motion activity, health care system

Relevance. The specific character of public administrators’ professional activity shows that there are negative factors connected with hypodynamic working conditions,

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mental and emotional overstrains and high concentration requirements (Tuckett, Henwood, Oliffe, Kolbe-Alexander, & Kim, 2016; Rodwell, & Fernando, 2015; Basol, 2013; Narkevich, Koretskaya, Vinogradov, & Narkevich, 2013). All these factors affect public administrators’ health considerably. Until now the aspects of public administrators’ health level have not been the subject of research in the Republic of Belarus. At the same time there are obvious economic and social losses caused by people who are unable to perform thoroughly their public functions due to low health level. Russian specialists have conducted a research on the influence that professional activities have upon Russian manufacturing enterprises officials’ health level. It was found out that the average age of administrators is only 49.3 years because of diseases connected with blood circulation system. Among the most widespread diseases are heart disorders (ischaemia), hypertension, psychosomatic disorders (neurosis). Most administrators and managers complained about these diseases (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. The most widespread public administrators’ diseases](image)

Taking into account the importance of this problem and the necessity of Byelorussian public administrators’ health level study, the Academy of Public Administration under the Aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus started a research in this field. As the Institutes of Public Service and Managerial Personnel are the organizational departments of the Academy, the Department of Physical Education is able to study the state of health of officials on different levels of public administration system.

**State of the problem**

Medicine states that it is still difficult to define health level of each particular person. Today it is a major problem. As any other science medicine tries not only to give qualitative
evaluation and descriptions of some phenomena but also to deduce precise mathematical laws. It is possible to provide qualitative and quantitative characteristics of health level and to predict person’s health development, if we find out the sum of major functional body systems called “spare capacity”. One of such quantitative methods with a prognostic component is the somatic health level assessment method developed by the academician G.L. Apanasenko (Apanasenko, 1999). It is suggested there is such “quantity” of health which is enough to create a so-called “safe level” at which death rate is only 1%. Only people with a high functional state of their organism have this “safe level” of health. Its reduction is accompanied with the growth of diseases and the decrease of functional backup of our organism to a dangerous level which verges on pathology (Sharp, & Hobson, 2016; Figueredo Ruiz, & Castillo Martínez, 2016).

It is important to admit that the absence of clinical signs does not guarantee that you are in a stable health condition. Apparently the average level of health condition can be considered a critical one. A total of 820 public administration officials of different age (from 25 to 50), level (from top level to street-level administrators), gender (650 males and 170 females) participated in the research. The received results make it possible to assess general tendency of somatic health of the people examined (Wong, & Spence Laschinger, 2015; Heron, Tully, McKinley, & Cupples, 2014; Holmgren, Rosstorp, & Rohdén, 2016).

For comparative analysis of biological and psychosocial aspects of adaptability of administrators we also used two-factor personality analysis developed by M. Gavrilova (Czechoslovakia) and approved by the European Union for school and university health and medicine (1988). As many as 96 administrators participated in our research.

In order to study how actively administrators use health-improving possibilities of fitness we developed a questionnaire which was filled in by 1543 administrators and managers (Rafikova, 2007).

**Results and their discussion**

The results of the research showed low levels of health, physical development and training of public administrators. According to the research 51.5% of examined males have low somatic health level (SHL). 18.3% of males have SHL below the average, 25.2 % have the average SHL and only 5.0% of the examined males have SHL above the average. Among
females 33.4% have low SHL, 31.4 have SHL below the average, 33.4 % have the average SHL and only 1.96% of examined females have SHL above the average. Total SHL index of 4 age groups is 2.5 for males and 1.25 for females. Thus neither males nor females achieved the so-called “safe” SHL index (14 and more). Only 7 % have “safe” SHL index. The low health indexes are caused by such risk factors as high arterial tension, rapid pulse in quiescent state, low life index stipulated by excess weight, low recoverability after stress (Figure 2).

The analysis has shown that the higher is the post and the older is the administrator, the lower his or her SHL is. The analysis of officials’ anamnesis showed that some disorders are the most common for public administrators. These are headaches in working daytime (36.4%), increased irritability (35.2%), considerable fatigability (20.1%).

The results of the research show the ambiguity of individual manifestation of vegetative and psychosocial adaptability. However, there are some common tendencies such as gender and post concerns. Thus, females -administrators (62.5 %) have high indicators of social adaptability together with decreased indicators of vegetative stability (76 %). Females are also more adapted to professional activity than males in regard to such aspects as psychosocial criteria (job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues, self-satisfaction). Their open interpersonal relations are more stable and they are actively engaged into various social relations, etc. By contrast males have social adaptability indicators below the average in the majority of cases (79.4 %).

In general, social adaptability means a sufficient level of a person’s activity and readiness to perform different social roles (ability to socialize).

Figure 2. Indices of public administrators’ somatic health level
The interdependence between social adaptability and physiological state was 70%. Nevertheless, according to the results of our research females have lower average indices of vegetative stability as compared with males. Thus a lower stability level in stressful situations and high level of anxiety and state of frustration can affect professional health of females-administrators and lead to a decrease in their work productivity. As for males-administrators they have high level of vegetative resistance (68.4%) but lower level of adaptability to organizational environment conditions.

It is obvious that along with the systematization of professional disorders and risk factors we should find means to predict and control them in order to protect public administrators’ health. Traditionally the complex of measurements concerning health care has general character and includes such measures as labour optimization, ergonomic improvements of working conditions and etc. However it is important to take into consideration that health care measures are more effective if they are applied to each person individually (we mean individual diagnosis and risk compensation).

Specialists in the spheres of health care and physical education are not satisfied with tendencies in behavior of the majority of top executives, including the surprising fact that they only virtually put health care on the first place, but in the reality it is quite opposite. The questionnaire developed for public administrators and managers has shown that to the question: “How do you try to overcome excess weight?” 75% of males and 55% of females choose the answer “in no way”. 11% of males and 12.5% of females keep to a diet and 22% and 0% of them accordingly prefer to be physically active.

As for the question “What do you think about physical activity?” only 17% answered that they go in for sports regularly, 69% do that from time to time (but it is not clear what “from time to time” means to them: once a week, a month, occasionally etc.), 14% told that they do not do sports at all. Active relaxation is common for 50% of administrators’ families, although the main part of it happens during summer vacations in the form of trips to the country and work at homestead land, fishing, hiking. There are no well-defined preferences as for the form of exercises (group or individual): 41% prefer sports activities in groups; 30% do individual sports activities; 26% do both. There are no distinctly formed interests as for
the knowledge about healthy way of life and physical education. The “I do not know”-answer is in the first place (30%); correspondingly, knowledge on healthy diet is in the second place (22%); individual sports are in the third place (15%).

Many of the respondents lack knowledge and skills concerning the usage of the means of physical education recreation trends, they are unable to use medical control in organizing their individual trainings, they do not make breaks or practice industrial gymnastics during their working hours.

The results of the research made during the last six years were expounded in the reports at various international conferences and symposia and are included in the monograph “Professional health of public administrators” (Rafikova and Gonherenok, 2009).

The increase in labour-related diseases is functionally related to the influence of occupational elements, but not social, legal and economic. Accordingly the main field of the research activities fulfilled by our department is the search for the ways of health improvement and increase of health spare capacities of public administrators. Considering the structural character of the Academy this aim is realized by invigoration of administrative staff during the period of post graduate preparation and also by the study of the students of the Academy, giving the future specialists knowledge and applied skills that will allow them to preserve health and overcome negative factors associated with their profession in the future. The originality of our research lies in the fact that we have an opportunity to study and analyze the information about the actual state of affairs in the active managerial environment. That concerns the different age and level of administration. We collected data for the research from the audience of the structural subdivisions of the Academy; the Institutes of Public Service and Managerial Personnel. In other words we have the opportunity to obtain real facts. By all means we want to improve the state of health of the future public administrators. In this case as the “staring material” we take data about the students, who represent the reserve of the administrative staff. Making positive corrections in the process of training of future managers from the point of view of instruction in preserving responsiveness, we may promote in practice the model of a contemporary administrator.
Conclusion

The results of the research allow us to draw the following conclusions and give some recommendations:

1. According to the received results, a substantial percentage of public administrators can be on a prenosological level of their physical condition. This is proved by the quantitative assessments of the parameters reflecting energypotential of biological systems of the participants of the research. One of the most important aims is to identify these people and help them to increase the level of tolerance of their organisms to adverse factors of work and life. That will improve the individual state of health and managerial staff’s health in general.

2. Alongside with the processes of health destruction there are also adaptive mechanisms due to which the homeostatic level of regulation of the vital parameters of our organism can be kept stable and ensure effective professional activity till retirement. The essential condition of development of such mechanisms is management of risks through the improving influence of fitness.

3. Changes need to be made in public administrators’ lifestyle, basic recommendations should be followed, and deliberate risks factors should be eliminated.

In order to improve and maintain public administrators’ health, it is recommended that they should participate in recreation activities and aerobic sports. That will reduce nervous stresses and tension and improve their health in general. The Department of Physical Education of the Academy of Public Administration under the Aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus has prepared the recommendations on physical education implementation into public administrators’ lifestyle that can be used for individual and corporate needs. The Department plans to publish these recommendations for the participants of academic courses and also for common usage.

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