

## Management of Nutrition Education in Spa Resorts in Poland

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**Abstract :** There are 45 statutory spa and treatment areas in Poland, and the demand for spa and treatment services increases year by year. Within each type of spa treatment facilities, nutritional education services are provided. During spa treatment, the patient learns the principles of rational nutrition and applied diet therapy. It should help him develop proper eating habits, which will also follow at home. However, the nutrition education system of spa resort patients should be considered as very imperfect and requiring a definite systemic correction. It has, at the same time, a wide human and infrastructure base, which guarantees to obtain positive reinforcement in the scope of undertaken activities and management. Unfortunately, this advantage is not fully used. The aim of the project was to assess the quality of implemented nutritional education and to assess the diet of patients in spa treatment entities from a nationwide perspective. The material for the study was data obtained as part of an in-depth interview conducted among nutrition department managers (25 interviews) and a survey addressed to patients (600 questionnaires) of a selected group of spa resorts from across the country about the implementation of nutritional education in institutions. Also, decade menus for the basic diet, easily digestible diet and diet with limitation of easily digestible carbohydrates (a total of 1,120 menus) were obtained for the study. Almost 2/3 of respondents (73.2%) were overweight or obese, but only 32.8% decided on an easily digestible or low-energy diet during the treatment. Most of the surveyed patients rated the nutrition in spa resorts as satisfactory. Classes on nutrition education were carried out mainly by a dietitian (65% of meetings), the other educators were doctors and nurses. The meetings (95%) were of a group nature and lasted only 30 minutes on average. The subjects of the classes concerned the principles of proper nutrition and composition of meals, a nutrition pyramid and a diet adapted to a given disease. The assessed menus did not meet the nutrition standards and, therefore, did not provide patients with the correct quality of nutrition. The norm of protein, fat, vitamin A, B12, phosphorus, iron and sodium was exceeded, while vitamin D, folic acid, magnesium and zinc were not enough than recommended. The study allowed to conclude that there is a large discrepancy between the recommendations presented during the nutrition education classes and the quality of diet implemented in the examined institutions. The project may contribute to the development of effective educational tools in nutrition, especially about a specific group of chronically ill patients.

**Keywords :** diet, management, nutritional education, spa resort

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