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World Spirometry Day

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The most important world organizations for respiratory medicine specialists: the European Respiratory Society (ERS), the American Thoracic Society (ATS), the Asia-Pacific Respiratory Society (APRS), the Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS), the Latin American Thoracic Society (ALAT), the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD), and many others, declared 2010 to be 'The Year of the Lung' [1]. Many events were organized as part of The Year of the Lung and several days gained special significance: for example, 4 February 2010 was declared World Lung Cancer Day, 14 May — World Asthma Day and 14 October — World Spirometry Day. Through contacts with the national scientific societies, the organizers tried to encourage as many countries as possible to become involved in this campaign.

World Spirometry Day, established in 2010 for the first time in history, was aimed at drawing attention to the significance of spirometry in the early diagnosis of pulmonary function abnormalities. Indeed, in accordance with the most recent recommendations on pulmonary function testing [2–4], spirometry should be performed in patients with respiratory signs, and symptoms or with abnormal results of chest X-ray and in persons at risk of exposure to harmful factors: current and former tobacco smokers, passive smokers and those exposed to dust, fumes and gases in the workplace. In this last group of individuals, spirometry enables to reveal airway obstruction before the patient develops exertional dyspnoea and before radiological signs of emphysema and hypoxaemia in arterial blood gas analysis are discovered [5].

Knowledge of these facts is not, however, widespread. The guiding principle of World Spirometry Day was to spread the knowledge about spirometry and to offer the opportunity to undergo spirometry to anyone who presented on that day to a designated place where spirometry was performed.

More than 70 countries from all continents declared their intention to participate in World Spirometry Day, including Poland. In April 2010, the organisers of The Year of the Lung asked the Polish Respiratory Society to organize World Spirometry Day in Poland. The Executive Board of the Polish Respiratory Society appointed Prof. Waldemar Tomalak from the Rabka Zdrój Branch of the Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases and Dr Małgorzata Czajkowska-Malinowska from the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Pneumology Centre in Bydgoszcz to be the co-ordinators of the event.

World Spirometry Day in Poland

The first World Spirometry Day posed an enormous challenge, both in terms of organization and media presence and also to follow the aims and methods formulated by the organizers. In Poland, organisational activities ran in two directions: to prepare the dissemination of the idea of World Spirometry Day in the media, and to organize spirometric testing. As this was an open-access event, the Polish Respiratory Society was not the only participant and organiser of World Spirometry Day in Poland. The Polish Federation of Asthma, Allergy and COPD Patients Associations, chaired by Dr Piotr Dąbrowiecki, actively joined the efforts to carry out World Spirometry Day.

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The most important media-related activities of World Spirometry Day included:

- spirometries at the Parliament of the Polish Republic organised on 7 October 2010 by the Polish Federation of Asthma, Allergy and COPD Patients Associations, with a total of 270 individuals, including more than 20 Polish MPs, being examined;
- a press conference at the Journalist's Club in Warsaw, held the day before World Spirometry Day, with the participation of Prof. Jan Zieliński, Prof. Waldemar Tomalak and Dr Piotr Boros (Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases), Dr Małgorzata Czajkowska-Malinowska (Bydgoszcz) and Dr Piotr Dąbrowiecki and Dr Adriana Jabłońska (the National Health Fund representative). During the press conference, Andrzej Supron, Polish wrestler, multiple medal winner at the World and European Championships, Olympic silver medallist and an active propagator of physical activity, encouraged people to undergo spirometry.

Approximately 20 journalists attended the press conference, which resulted in the dissemination of the event by the Polish Press Agency, in the press (e.g. *Życie Warszawy*, *Świat Medycyny*), on popular websites by advertisements and interviews aired on the day of the event by such radio stations such as Polish Radio One, Polish Radio Three, Radio Plus and Information Radio Agency:

- press advertising in the national edition of *Superexpress* (circulation 270,000 copies);
- addendum in *Rzeczpospolita* (a national daily);
- appearance of Dr Tadeusz Zielonka on national television in the programme entitled 'Tea or Coffee'.

Additionally, local radio stations, press, television and websites conducted interviews with specialists on topics including spirometry, World Spirometry Day, COPD, and asthma. These events took place in such cities as Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kielce, Kraków, Łódź and Poznań. TVP Bydgoszcz, as part of the Regional Programme for the Prevention of Lung Diseases, aired advertisements encouraging viewers to undergo spirometry. In many cities, the public was encouraged to undergo spirometry by pulmonologists as well as province marshals, city presidents and mayors. Information about spirometry and where the test could be taken were also published in Public Information Bulletins in various towns and cities. Information about World Spirometry Day was published by more than 100 web services.

The organizational preparation for spirometry as part of World Spirometry Day began at the level of local structures of the Polish Respiratory Society. The principal goals were:

- open access to spirometry,
- possibility of performing spirometry in the public space.

In many Polish cities, local authorities were encouraged and persuaded to offer the possibility of carrying out spirometric testing at the city council buildings. In several cities, spirometry was also carried out at shopping centres.

Overall, most of the local branches of the Polish Respiratory Society expressed their interest in taking part in the campaign. Information about venues were published (and updated on an ongoing basis) on the Polish Respiratory Society website. Care was also taken to provide information to the media and previously prepared promotional materials (banners, leaflets and posters) were used to disseminate information about the availability of free spirometry testing. Number of sites ready to carry out spirometric testing has been increasing until the last moment. As a result, patients were expected at more than 200 locations all over Poland, including most of the large cities.

During World Spirometry Day, progress reports were provided twice to the World Spirometry Day office in Sheffield: at midday and at 4 pm. Poland was a definite leader on a global scale. According to the information provided, the number of spirometries completed in respective cities and towns were:

- Warsaw: 162 spirometries,
- Olsztyn: 73 spirometries,
- Sopot: 97 spirometries,
- Katowice: 58 spirometries,
- Poznań: 195 spirometries,
- Łódź: 54 spirometries,
- Bydgoszcz and the Kujawsko-Pomorskie province: 614 spirometries,
- Kraków: 208 spirometries,
- Kielce and the Świętokrzyskie province: 246 spirometries,
- Szczecin: 214 spirometries,
- Gdańsk: 191 spirometries,
- Jelenia Góra: 79 spirometries,
- Rabka: 18 spirometries,
- Nowa Ruda (the Lower Silesian province): 30 spirometries,
- The Polish Federation of Asthma, Allergy and COPD Patients Associations: 753 spirometries.

Reports received after the event revealed that more than 2,500 free spirometries had been performed in Poland as a whole on World Spirometry

Day at the initiative of the Polish Respiratory Society, while the Polish Federation of Asthma, Allergy and COPD Patients Associations performed nearly 3,000 spirometries.

In our opinion, the campaign was a success. It revealed that the community of the Polish Respiratory Society members is capable of joining forces to organize such an event. In addition, the opportunity to promote World Spirometry Day was taken.

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