

Disability and sport: a two years experience from Modena, Italy

Caregnato Andrea Cesare¹, Tripi Ferdinando¹, Casolari Valeria¹, Ilari Barbara¹, Luppi Chiara¹, Severi Sabrina¹, Zarzana Paolo²

(Local Health Unit of Modena¹, Centro Sportivo Italiano sez. Modena², Italy)

Introduction

The "Disability and Sport" project has begun in November 2007 at the Service of Sports Medicine of Local Health Unit of Modena. It was created with assistance of institutions from both public and private sectors by using facilities and health personnel of Regional Health Service of Emilia-Romagna. It takes care of disabled people who play sports in sports associations, disabled people involved in physical activities through social services and voluntary associations and disabled that are not yet included in any sport. Physical inactivity is one of the leading causes of illness and death, mainly due to damages of the cardiovascular system. In disabled population, low motor activity and consequent weight gain determines reduction of residual abilities and further compromises autonomy, as has already been reported (Edouard et al, 2007). Sport inappropriate for a disabled person may cause health or psychological problems.

Development

The project consists of a multidisciplinary assessment (sport medicine, rehabilitation, nutrition, cardiology) for people with motor or mental disabilities or a combination of both. The basic objective is to foster the practice of sport safely, according to Pittet et al (2009). The second objective is to create a local network for disabled persons, their families and sports clubs. Finally we wish to prepare health and sports technicians to assist disabled athletes. The experimental phase includes two periods of 18 months each from November 2007 to May 2011. They are wholly funded by private donors and public bodies; the total budget is 100.000 euros. Expenditure control is exercised by the Department of Public Health of Modena. From November 2007 to November 2009 we performed 196 visits, 131

first visits (male: 101, female 30) and 65 controls. The average age was 31.3 years (maximum 64, minimum 11). Competitive athletes were 37, non-agonists 94. The prevalence group was mentally disabled (70), compared to motor (39) and to mixed disabilities (22). The most represented sport was riding followed by swimming and athletics.

Conclusion

The project allows us to study the correlations between sport, health status and social integration in disabled people, as Wilhelm (2000) has proposed. During the period under review there were 2 cases of abandonment of sport: one for personal problems, one stopped because for health reasons (hypertension not adequately controlled by medication). In seven cases it was necessary to amend or supplement the sport practiced; in spine disorders of the subjects with Down Syndrome, we associated swimming with riding. Particular attention was paid to cardiovascular patients with spinal cord injury practicing handybike. The main line of development involves collaboration with high schools of Modena for disabled students aged between 14 and 19 years. Our goal is to control the safety of sport in schools and ensure the continuation of activity even after the completion of studies.

REFERENCES

Edouard, P. et al. *Ann Réadap Méd Phys* 50, 510-519, 2007.

Pittet, I. et al. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* Vol 163 (no. 6), 565, 2009.

Wilhelm, U. *Rehabilitation (Stuttg)*; 39(5):283-288, 2000.

Major funders of the project

Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, Panathlon International Club, Azienda USL, Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria, Comune e Provincia, Lions Club, (Modena)

Assessorato Politiche per la Salute Emilia-Romagna, Comune Carpi, Famiglia Giuseppe Panini

Keywords: disability, sport