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EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES AND NEEDS OF OLDER WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF MAINTAINING THEIR EMPLOYMENT

OCENA DZIAŁAŃ I POTRZEBY STARSZYCH PRACOWNIKÓW W KONTEKŚCIE UTRZYMYWANIA ICH W ZATRUDNIENIU

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ABSTRACT

Background: The article presents the results of evaluation of activities for older workers (50+). The aim of the study was the examination of older workers' opinions on activities undertaken in their companies related to maintaining older workers' employment. **Material and Methods:** Data is derived from the questionnaire survey conducted on 50+ employees (250 women and 250 men). **Results:** Almost one fifth of the employees admitted that they feel discriminated against in their company. Only a quarter of older workers declared that they had special offer of trainings, most of them concerned update trainings, expending knowledge (40% of responses). Only about one fifth of respondents admitted that they were encouraged to further their education. The smallest number of actions concerned health promotion. **Conclusions:** Older workers have different needs than younger ones, especially in the organization and working conditions. Activities related to the management of aging in Poland are still taken to a small extent. Disturbing is the fact that so few respondents admitted that in their companies, there were activities conducted concerning health promotion. From the point of view of working capacity and extending the retirement age, such initiatives should be carried out on a large scale among workers of all ages, with particular emphasis on the elderly. Med Pr 2013;64(3):297–306

Key words: older employees, needs, age management

STRESZCZENIE

Wstęp: W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań dotyczących działań związanych z zarządzaniem wiekiem w Polsce w opiniach starszych pracowników (50+). **Cel pracy:** Celem było zbadanie opinii starszych pracowników na temat działań podejmowanych w ich przedsiębiorstwach w zakresie utrzymywania w zatrudnieniu osób 50+. **Materiał i metody:** Dane pochodzą z wywiadu kwestionariuszowego przeprowadzonego wśród 500 pracowników w wieku 50+ (250 kobiet i 250 mężczyzn). **Wyniki:** Prawie 1/5 pracowników przyznała, że czuje się dyskryminowana w swojej firmie. Zaledwie 1/4 starszych pracowników zadeklarowała istnienie szkoleń adresowanych do nich; przy czym najwięcej z nich dotyczyło aktualizacji/poszerzenia wiedzy (40% wskazań). Tylko około 1/5 badanych przyznała, że była zachęcana do dalszego kształcenia. Najmniej działań adresowanych do starszych pracowników dotyczyło zagadnień związanych z dbałością o zdrowie. **Wnioski:** Działania związane z zarządzaniem wiekiem w Polsce są podejmowane nadal w niewielkim stopniu. Starsi pracownicy mają inne niż młodszy potrzeby w zakresie organizacji i warunków pracy. Niepokojące jest, że tak niewiele spośród badanych osób informowało o działaniach związanych z dbałością o zdrowie prowadzonych w ich przedsiębiorstwach. Z punktu widzenia zdolności do pracy oraz wydłużania wieku emerytalnego takie inicjatywy powinny być prowadzone na szeroką skalę wśród pracowników w każdym wieku, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem osób starszych. Med. Pr. 2013;64(3):297–306

Słowa kluczowe: pracownicy starsi, potrzeby, zarządzanie wiekiem

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INTRODUCTION

In most European countries, especially in Poland, an increase in the population of persons above 50 years of age has been observed. This is due to the generation of people born after World War II (the so-called “baby boomers”) gradually reaching this age and the observed decline of fertility rate over the last decades. In terms of

the labour market, it means the decrease in the number of persons at their productivity age.

According to Eurostat data (2012), employment rate among persons aged between 55–64 in Poland in 2011 was 36.9% (27.3% for women, 47.8% for men). Although the rate increased, as compared to the previous year (2010 – 34%, including 24.2% of women, and 45.3% of men), it is still one of the lowest rates in

the EU. The average rate for the EU is 47.7% (40.2% for women, 55.2% for men) (1).

Currently, various activities are being undertaken in order to minimize the consequences of the unavoidable process of aging. One of them is called “age management”, it is defined as an element of human resources management or a part of widely-understood diversity management (combating age, gender and religious discrimination). Its objective is to conduct activities which allow for a more effective use of human resources in companies by taking into account the needs and capabilities of employees of all ages (2). The scope of activities targeted at employees above 50 years old, which are performed for the purpose of effective age management, includes initiatives related to: recruitment, health care, lifelong learning, career development, and organization of work and working conditions.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the opinion of older employees on the activities implemented at their companies in terms of maintaining the employment of 50+ workers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research was conducted among 500 workers aged 50+ (250 women and 250 men) who were employed at small (10–49 workers), middle (50–249 workers) and big (over 249 workers) companies that represent section 5 of the Polish Classification of Activity (PKD 2007) (3): Manufacturing, Construction, Wholesale and Retail Trade and the Repair of Motor Vehicles, Administrative and Support Service Activities, Human Health and Social Work Activities. Given the structure of companies in Poland (4), micro-enterprises (0–9) were not included in the research as their number is the highest, and in this case, proportional sampling could lead to their overrepresentation. The sampling was of amount and quota nature and was conducted by taking into account three key features: gender, size of the business, affiliation to one of PKD 2007 sections. The selection of companies was performed in Mazovian Voivodship. The persons, who participated in the study, represented both private companies (250 persons) and public sector (250 persons). The sample $N = 500$ (at confidence level 0.95, estimated fraction of 0.5 and maximal error of 0.04) was chosen from the population $N = 8000$.

The selection of the types of economic activity was determined by GUS (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – Central Statistical Office of Poland) study (5), which clearly indicates that the three chosen sections have the biggest number of employees over 50 years old.

In the study, the diagnostic poll method was applied with anonymous survey that was developed for the purpose of the study on the basis of available reference material (6–9). It contained several parts regarding such aspects as:

- recruitment (questions related to the benefits of hiring 50+ workers; factors taken into account while recruiting 50+);
- lifelong learning, professional development (questions about: type of training in which 50+ workers take part, possibilities of further education for 50+ workers, training of younger employees provided by older employees, training of older employees provided by younger colleagues, promoting older employees);
- organization of work and working conditions (questions about: flexible working time, extra leave, mobility between positions, more frequent inspections of working stations of 50+ workers; modification of working stations, occupational safety and health, the needs of 50+ workers as to the organization of work and working conditions);
- health (health care) of 50+ workers (questions about: package of medical services, passes to physical activities, training/counseling related to healthy lifestyle, training/counseling related to aging and the methods of its delaying, training/counseling related to occupational safety and health).

Statistical analysis of results

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS 16.0 software. Chi-square test was used to analyze the relation between the tested variables.

Description of the examined sample

From among the tested employees, the oldest person was 75 years old. The average length of service varied between 16 and 53 years and, at the present place of employment, during the survey, it ranged from 1 to 40 years. The biggest group comprised of persons with post-secondary education or secondary professional education (33%) and persons performing mental work (40%). In terms of positions, most of the examined persons (20%) worked as “personal service workers and vendors”, at the second place there were “specialists” (about 19%). As to the positions, the study shows significant statistical differences between men and women. Considerably more women than men were employed as office workers (23.2% and 6.8% respectively). However, at managerial positions men were employed slightly more often than women (Table 1). The remaining data describing the group tested is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study group
Tabela 1. Charakterystyka badanej grupy

Parameters Parametry	Respondents Badani (N = 500) [%]			P
	total ogółem	women kobiety	men mężczyźni	
Marital status / Stan cywilny				
single / panna/kawaler	5.0	3.6	6.4	
married / mężatka/zonaty	67.2	67.2	67.2	ns
widow/widower / wdowa/wdowiec	15.4	16.0	14.8	
divorced / rozwiedziona(y)	12.4	13.2	11.6	
Education / Wykształcenie				
tertiary / wyższe magisterskie i równorzędne	21.8	23.2	20.4	
post-secondary and vocational secondary / policealne lub średnie zawodowe	33.4	31.6	35.2	
general secondary / średnie ogólnokształcące	23.2	28.0	18.4	< 0.040
basic vocational / zasadnicze zawodowe	17.6	13.6	21.6	
lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary / gimnazjalne lub niższe	1.4	0.8	2.0	
no data / brak danych	2.6	2.8	2.4	
Type of employment contract / Rodzaj umowy o pracę				
via the agency agreement / umowa za pośrednictwem agencji zatrudnienia	64.3	66.8	61.7	
contract for an indefinite period / umowa o pracę na czas nieokreślony	21.7	21.2	22.2	
fixed-term contract / umowa o pracę na czas określony	8.2	7.2	9.3	ns
written order / umowa zlecenie	2.8	1.6	4.0	
contract work / umowa o dzieło	1.8	1.6	2.0	
no data / brak danych	4.6	1.6	0.8	
Type of profession / Zajmowane stanowisko				
managers / kierownicy	13.0	11.6	14.4	
professionals / specjaliści	18.6	18.4	18.8	
technicians and associate professionals / technicy i inny średni personel	11.0	11.6	10.4	
office workers / pracownicy biurowi	15.0	23.2	6.8	< 0.005
service and sales workers / pracownicy usług osobistych i sprzedawcy	20.2	22.8	17.6	
craft and related trades workers / robotnicy przemysłowi i rzemieślnicy	4.2	2.8	5.6	
plant and machine operators and assemblers / operatorzy i monterzy maszyn	4.8	0.4	9.2	
elementary occupation / wykonujący proste prace	11.2	7.2	15.2	
no data / brak danych	2.0	2.0	2.0	
Type of work / Rodzaj wykonywanej pracy				
psychological demanding work, white-collar workers / umysłowa	40.6	51.2	30.0	
physical demanding work, blue-collar workers / fizyczna	25.8	20.4	31.2	< 0.005
psychological and physical demanding work, gray-collar workers / mieszana	29.0	22.8	35.2	
no data / brak danych	4.9	5.6	3.6	

ns – not significant / nieistotne statystycznie.

RESULTS

About 25% persons (incl. 25% of women and 21% of men) changed their job after turning 50 years old. The respondents mentioned various reasons which were grouped into a few categories according to the frequency they were mentioned:

- redundancy (“older workers were laid off”), dissolution of the company,
- health problems,
- getting other (better-paid) job,
- retiring and getting another extra job,
- no qualifications.

Over 93% of the respondents (similar figures for men and women) revealed that they maintain good relations with younger colleagues. More than 87% of workers felt they were necessary for their companies. Moreover, a significant proportion of persons (almost 80%) felt they were recognized at their companies for their knowledge and experience. More than half of the respondents

did the job that corresponded to their learned profession and skills. Only 1/5 of the tested persons were discriminated for their age (Table 2).

Recruitment

Most of the respondents admitted that during the recruitment process, companies focus mainly on knowledge, skills, experience and education. At the same time, more than 40% revealed that the age of an employee is also significant (Table 3).

Lifelong training / professional development

Overall, almost 40% of workers admitted that 50+ workers take part in all courses, trainings, conferences organized by their companies, but only around 25% of workers admitted that at their companies, there have been trainings, courses, conferences addressed specially to older workers. More than 37% of workers claimed that they are provided with trainings/courses that improve skills. A large percentage of workers (43%) indicated they

Table 2. General feelings of 50+ workers related to their work
Tabela 2. Ogólne odczucia pracowników 50+ dotyczące ich pracy

Feelings Odczucia	Respondents Badani (N = 500) [%]			P
	total ogółem	women kobiety	men mężczyźni	
I feel discriminated / Czuję się dyskryminowana(y) w firmie	18.0	18.0	18.0	ns
I have good contact with young workers / Utrzymuję dobre relacje z młodszymi kolegami	93.6	96.4	90.8	< 0.03
I feel that I'm needed in the company / Czuję się potrzebna(y) w firmie	86.8	90.0	83.6	< 0.04
I have a sense of recognition in the company because of my knowledge/experience / Czuję, że mam uznanie w firmie ze względu na moją wiedzę/doświadczenie	79.6	80.0	79.2	ns
My work tasks are / Powierzone mi prace są:				ns
consistent with my learned profession, corresponding to my skills / zgodne z wyuczonym zawodem, odpowiadające moim umiejętnościom	54.8	53.6	56.0	
consistent with my learned profession, but overstated in relation to my skills / zgodne z wyuczonym zawodem, ale zawyżone w stosunku do moich umiejętności	13.4	10.4	16.4	
consistent with my learned profession, but understated in relation to my skills / zgodne z wyuczonym zawodem, ale zaniżone w stosunku do moich umiejętności	5.4	6.0	4.8	
inconsistent with the learned profession, but my skills are corresponding / niezgodne z wyuczonym zawodem, ale odpowiadające moim umiejętnościom	16.8	20.4	13.2	
inconsistent with the learned profession and overstated in relation to my skills / niezgodne z wyuczonym zawodem i zawyżone w stosunku do moich umiejętności	5.2	5.6	4.8	
inconsistent with the learned profession and understated in relation to my skills / niezgodne z wyuczonym zawodem i zaniżone w stosunku do moich umiejętności	3.6	2.8	4.4	

Abbreviations as in Table 1 / Objasnienia jak w tabeli 1.

Table 3. Types of activities in the company undertaken with reference to 50+ workers
Tabela 3. Rodzaje działań podejmowanych w firmie ukierunkowanej na pracowników 50+

Activities Działania	Respondents Badani (N = 500) [%]			p
	total ogółem	women kobiety	men mężczyźni	
Recruitment – factors to be taken into account when recruiting staff / Rekrutacja – czynniki brane pod uwagę podczas rekrutacji pracowników				
education / wykształcenie	61.6	66.8	56.4	< 0.05
experience / doświadczenie	79.8	80.0	78.8	ns
knowledge and skills / wiedza i umiejętności	80.4	82.4	78.4	ns
age / wiek	43.2	45.2	41.2	ns
knowledge of foreign languages / znajomość języków obcych	40.4	43.6	45.6	ns
computer skills / obsługa komputera	48.6	53.6	43.6	< 0.02
Professional development / Rozwój zawodowy				
participation of 50+ workers in all conferences, trainings, courses offered by companies / uczestnictwo pracowników 50+ we wszystkich konferencjach, szkoleniach, kursach oferowanych przez firmę	39.8	43.2	36.4	ns
Trainings for 50+ workers / Adresowanie szkoleń do pracowników 50+				
update trainings, expanding knowledge / szkolenia aktualizujące/poszerzające wiedzę	40.2	44.0	36.4	< 0.01
trainings, courses / szkolenia, kursy podnoszące kwalifikacje	37.4	39.6	35.2	< 0.01
computer courses / kursy komputerowe	27.8	30.0	25.6	< 0.00
foreign language courses / kursy języków obcych	15.6	16.4	14.8	< 0.05
Participation in the above courses / Uczestnictwo w powyższych szkoleniach				
yes / tak	38.8	44.8	32.8	< 0.01
proposed, but for personal reasons I did not take part / proponowano, ale z przyczyn osobistych nie brałem udziału	8.2	9.2	7.2	
proposed, but I wasn't interested / proponowano, ale nie byłam(em) zainteresowany	6.2	6.0	6.4	
not proposed / nie proponowano	43.0	38.4	47.6	
Encouragement of employees to further their education (e.g. through funding, additional leave) / Zachęcanie pracowników do dalszego kształcenia (np. poprzez dofinansowanie, dodatkowe urlopy)	23.2	22.0	24.4	ns
Involving 50+ employees in the training of younger workers / Angażowanie pracowników 50+ w szkolenie młodszych pracowników	46.4	44.8	48.0	ns
The participation of 50+ workers in training by younger workers (e.g. on computer operation or new information technologies) / Szkolenie pracowników 50+ przez młodszych pracowników (np. w zakresie obsługi komputera lub nowych technologii informacyjnych)	37.8	44.0	31.6	< 0.010
Promotion of 50+ workers / Awansowanie pracowników 50+	35.6	31.6	39.6	ns
Equal (compared with younger) access to the resources of companies / Równy (w porównaniu z młodszymi) dostęp pracowników 50+ do zasobów firmy				
materials, information / materiały, informacje	76.0	76.8	75.2	ns
trainings, courses / szkolenia, kursy	63.2	61.6	64.8	ns

Table 3. Types of activities in the company undertaken with reference to 50+ workers – cont.
Tabela 3. Rodzaje działań podejmowanych w firmie ukierunkowanej na pracowników 50+ – cd.

Activities Działania	Respondents Badani (N = 500) [%]			P
	total ogółem	women kobiety	men mężczyźni	
Organization and working conditions / Organizacja i warunki pracy				
50+ workers are asked about their satisfaction with work-related conditions and organization of work / pracownikom 50+ zadaje się pytania o ich satysfakcję z pracy związanej z warunkami i organizacją pracy	35.6	33.6	37.6	ns
work conditions are good and meet my needs / warunki pracy są dobre i odpowiadają moim potrzebom	74.0	74.0	74.0	ns
my job is regularly checked and adapted to my needs / moje stanowisko pracy jest regularnie sprawdzane i dostosowywane do moich potrzeb	55.0	52.0	58.0	< 0.070
at my workplace, there are harmful factors / na moim stanowisku pracy są czynniki szkodliwe/uciążliwe dla mojego zdrowia	36.2	31.6	40.8	ns
possibility to work flexible hours / możliwość pracy w elastycznym czasie	44.2	43.6	44.8	ns
opportunity to get paid leave / możliwość otrzymania dłuższego lub dodatkowego urlopu	42.2	42.0	42.4	ns
opportunity to get paid leave for further education / możliwość otrzymania płatnego urlopu w celu dalszego kształcenia się	18.0	16.8	19.2	ns
transfers between functions, subject to the salary / przeniesienia między stanowiskami, z zachowaniem wynagrodzenia	28.0	28.0	28.0	ns
more frequent inspections of working conditions with reference to health and safety / częstsze kontrole warunków pracy w kontekście zdrowia i bezpieczeństwa	29.8	26.4	33.2	ns
modifications of workplaces to better match 50+ employees / modyfikacje stanowisk pracy w celu lepszego dopasowania do pracowników 50+	31.4	31.2	31.6	ns
training in the organization and working conditions / szkolenia dotyczące organizacji i warunków pracy (bhp)	24.4	25.6	23.2	ns
holding discussions about the needs of 50+ workers in the organization and work conditions / przeprowadzanie rozmów dotyczących potrzeb pracowników 50+ w zakresie organizacji i warunków ich pracy	25.2	26.0	24.4	ns
Health care / Ochrona zdrowia				
free medical service packages / bezpłatne pakiety usług medycznych	25.2	26.0	24.4	ns
free vouchers for physical activity / bezpłatne karnety na zajęcia fizyczne (sport)	35.0	31.6	38.4	ns
training, counseling on healthy lifestyle / szkolenia, poradnictwo dotyczące prozdrowotnego stylu życia	20.6	20.4	20.8	ns
training advice on the process of aging and the possibility of delaying it / szkolenia, poradnictwo dotyczące procesów starzenia i możliwości ich opóźnienia	13.6	13.2	14.0	ns
training, counseling on healthy and safe working conditions / szkolenia, poradnictwo dotyczące zdrowych i bezpiecznych warunków pracy	29.8	26.4	33.2	ns

Abbreviations as in Table 1 / Objasnienia jak w tabeli 1.

have not been offered any training or courses. Almost 36% of the respondents reported that at their companies, older workers are promoted to higher positions. More than 46%

of workers have been involved in the training of their young colleagues (mentoring) and almost 38% indicated they had been trained by younger workers (Table 3).

Health care

Only about 20% of workers declared that their companies have provided counseling concerning healthy lifestyle, but merely 14% of them indicated that they were trained about aging processes and possibilities of delaying them. About a quarter of older workers have been offered free medical services packages and 35% of them got free passes to physical activities (sport). About 30% of the respondents pointed out that their companies had provided training/counseling regarding occupational safety and health (Table 3).

Organization of work and working conditions

Only about 36% of the respondents declared that they were asked about job satisfaction as to its organization and working conditions. More than 70% pointed out that their working conditions were good and met their needs. More than a half of them reported that their workplaces were regularly checked and adapted to their needs. Almost 45% of workers declared they had a chance to work flexible working hours. About 40% of them admitted that their working stations were adjusted to their needs (Table 3).

When answering open-ended question, about 1/5 of workers admitted that at their companies, steps addressed to older workers should be taken. The activities mentioned by the respondents were grouped into several groups according to the frequency they were mentioned:

- improving qualifications,
- computer courses and new technology trainings,
- foreign language courses,
- health care (free packages of medical services, fitness cards),
- healthy lifestyle counseling (care for physical and mental health, fighting stress),
- organization of work (flexible working hours, extra leave).

Older workers were also asked an open-ended question about health problems they would like to obtain information about. The answers can be divided into several categories, according to the frequency they were mentioned:

- cardiovascular diseases,
- health issues of 50+ persons (incl. 50+ women),
- women's diseases,
- musculoskeletal problems,
- diabetes, obesity,
- stress, depression,
- vision, hearing.

Older workers were asked an open-ended question about working environment factors that in their opinion, might cause some difficulties or medical problems in the future. Among the most frequently mentioned factors there were: noise (22.6%) manual labour / carrying heavy items (13.9%), stress (31.3%), chemicals / dust / pollution (7.7%), sitting position at the computer (8.2%)¹.

The analysis of the health condition, health problems and ability to work of older workers will be presented in the next article.

OVERVIEW

The aim of the present study is to evaluate the activities which, in the opinion of 50+ workers, should be carried out to maintain their employment.

Almost 94% admitted that they had good relations with their younger colleagues, and 87% felt needed at their companies. Only about 1/5 of workers admitted that they are discriminated at their companies. This result, however, is worse than the one presented in other studies conducted in Poland (10) which pointed out that a small proportion of people – only 6% in 2009 and 7% in 2010, admitted they were discriminated at work due to their age. This was more common among women and persons with basic vocational education.

The present study shows that almost half of 50+ workers (about 45%) have the possibility to work flexible hours. It is a surprisingly high result as compared to the results of the studies carried out by Kononowicz et al. (10), which showed that every fourth company employing 50+ persons and using flexible working hours does not apply them to older workers. There are some limitations of the interpretation of such a result. On the one hand, one of the reasons for such a result may be a failure to explain to respondents what flexible working hours are, on the other hand, it may have been caused by the lack of information from the respondents themselves on what it meant to them.

Many older workers prefer flexible working hours, in some cases, it could be shorter working hours, partial retirement, changes of work rhythm or working shifts, longer leave, job rotation, reducing overtime or additional responsibilities. Flexible working hours could play a key role at maintaining personnel, achieving company goals as well as increasing productivity and employees' motivation and satisfaction (11).

¹ Frequency rates were calculated within a sample of N = 208 (292 – no data).

At companies with flexible working hours, the rate of sickness absence is lower, which, in turn, positively affects their overall productivity and competitiveness. Flexible working hours also promote better work-home balance. Studies conducted in Europe show that work-home balance is a major priority for a significant number of workers (11).

The data presented shows that only 28% of older workers have had a chance to change working place maintaining the same salary. The studies of Kononowicz et al. (10) show that the employees of 35% of companies had such an opportunity in 2010 (in 2009 this percentage was higher and equaled 47%).

Only 25% of the 50+ workers taking part in own studies declared that their companies provided training dedicated to their age group and nearly 39% admitted they had participated in trainings on such topics as: update/expansion of knowledge, raising qualifications, computer training and foreign language courses. Only 23% of the respondents admitted they were encouraged to further their education, for example through subsidies or extra leave.

The studies of Kononowicz et al. (10) show that in 2010, 36% of companies declared that over the period of 12 months prior to the study, they had organized training (other than occupational safety and health or fire safety). In 2010 one could observe a growth in the percentage of companies declaring that 50+ workers had participated in training (from 61% in 2009 to 85% in 2010). This opportunity was more common at companies with more than 50 workers than in the smaller ones.

Older persons, i.e. those aged between 55 and 64, are the group of workers who rarely participate in training. The reasons for this are numerous: most often it is due to the lack of time caused by work or family matters, lack of awareness and motivation – such training is not always appreciated or rewarded, lack of information about available trainings, lack of financial resources. Among other barriers for further education, the following are also mentioned: fear of the unknown, insecurity, lack of faith in one's abilities. It must be noted that the motivation of older workers to further their education may often be apparent – it is rather due to the fear of losing the job for not undertaking it (12).

There is an opinion (stereotype) that persons over 50 years old are reluctant to improve their qualifications, i.e. taking part in training. The in-depth interviews conducted by Kononowicz et al. (10) show that this problem does not exist at job positions the nature of which

forces continuous learning. The quantitative analysis of the same study indicates that ordinarily older workers willingly take part in trainings (45%, 27% disagree).

The above mentioned studies show that the smallest number of activities dedicated to older workers concerned their health. Only 1/4 of the respondents told that they had free medical service packages, but nearly 1/4 of them had received training related to healthy lifestyle, and only 14% of them got training related to aging processes and the ways of delaying it. Health promotion at workplace is insufficient. Most often, health care at workplace is reduced to complying with the provisions of occupational safety and health. This has been confirmed by the study conducted by the Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine in Łódź (Poland) (13). It shows that 44% out of the 1128 surveyed persons admitted that at their companies, care for health was limited only to the compliance with the provisions of occupational safety and health. Almost 40% of respondents said their companies organized additional activities related to health, but 18% indicated they were meant for selected groups. However, almost 15% admitted their companies did not take care after employees' health at all.

Providing occupational safety and health training or facilitating the development of workers' skills is the employer's responsibility (Article 17 of the Polish Labour Code) (14), but providing special training for older workers that would meet their individual needs depends on the goodwill of employers.

The literature of the subject shows that healthy, satisfied and motivated workers create good and strong teams. Therefore, actions must be taken to promote health, maintain/improve the ability to work and the well-being of employees (not only older ones) (15,16).

In the light of the presented results, health care of workers and their individual attitude to it seem to be crucial in the context of extending working age in Poland with maintaining the ability to work. There is a number of age-related physical and psychological changes. These changes, however, can be moderated by increasing physical activity, intellectual activity and other lifestyle-related factors (17).

According to the study conducted by the Finish Institute of Occupational Health, for older workers, health promotion in the workplace has a positive impact on their health, ability to work, job satisfaction and productivity (18). However, as the studies conducted in companies show, such actions are still rare in Poland (19).

With older retiring workers, enterprises (companies) lose knowledge and experience which older workers are

a valuable source of. On the other hand, older workers often cannot keep up with the pace of work, their ability to work is reduced and the risk of premature diseases increases (20). It is, therefore, necessary that companies take appropriate preventive measures in the form of skillful human resources management by implementing, for instance, transfer of knowledge between older and younger workers, flexible working forms, opportunities for trainings for older workers and improving working conditions (21).

Demographic and economic conditions indicate the need to prolong working activity. Encouraging older workers to stay employed for longer is, however, justified only if parallel actions are taken in the field of age management and maintaining the ability to work (22).

CONCLUSIONS

Activities related to age management in Poland are still unsatisfactory. Even more disturbing is the low number of respondents who admitted that in their companies, there were activities related to health promotion. From the perspective of the ability to work and extending the retirement age such initiatives should be carried out on a large scale among workers of all ages with special emphasis put on older workers. It seems that conducting activities aimed at changing the health habits of workers may be beneficial for workers themselves (better well-being, ability to work) and employers (less absence from work, bigger productivity and efficiency).

Basing on the present study, it can be argued that the most important activities to be taken in order to maintain the employment of 50+ workers are: organization of work and its conditions, health care and health promotion and lifelong training.

Lifelong training of 50+ workers, despite their vast knowledge and experience, is necessary for their active participation in professional life, well-being in the working environment and maintaining good relations with their younger colleagues. The conducted studies show that stronger emphasis should be put on the organization of training activities dedicated to 50+ workers and corresponding to their needs.

Older workers have different needs than younger ones as to the organization of work and its conditions. It refers to working time, shifts work, adjusting working spaces or shifting between different positions. Therefore, there is a need to pay special attention to the analysis of older workers' needs and, thus, adapting working conditions to their abilities.

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