

USING THE MEDICAL INTERNET AND E-HEALTH SERVICES IN THE OPINION OF POLISH ELDERLY IN 2012

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INTRODUCTION. Internet and e-health services have a substantial potential to support efficient and effective care for the elderly. The aim of the study was to investigate the use of Internet for health-related purposes among Polish elderly, the frequency and reasons of use, the importance of e-health services and the consequences of use.

MATERIAL AND METHODS. A total of 242 elderly in the age of 60 years and more were selected from the Polish population by random sampling. Data collection was carried out by computer-assisted telephone interviews in October-November 2012.

RESULTS. The study showed that the Internet was ever used by 32% of the elderly. Among Internet users 81% of older people used the Internet to obtain information about health or illness. The Internet was one of the less important sources of information (important for 27% of respondents); face to face contact with health professionals and family and friends are still the most required source of medical information (75%). Only 7% of elderly Internet users approached the family physician, specialists or other health professionals over the Internet. Factors that positively affected the use of Internet among elderly were male gender, younger age, higher education, living with family, mobile phone use and subjective assessment of one's own health as good. The doctor's provision of the Internet-based services was important in opinion of approximately 1/4 of older people.

CONCLUSION. However older people are certainly not the most enthusiastic users of ICT tools, more and more elderly use them for health purposes.