

Walk for Your Health – EIM Poland

On September 24th, the first Polish “Walk for Health” took place at Skaryszewski Park in Warsaw, Poland. Organised by the Medical Fitness Project, a national health organization, in association with Exercise is Medicine® (EIM) leaders in Poland, this walk brought together hundreds of people to celebrate the health benefits of being physically active. This pro-health initiative was supported and attended by Polish Vice-Minister of Health, Dr. Jarosław Pinkas, who brought his entire family to the walk.

“Walk for Health” is the first major event hosted by the Medical Fitness Project. The organization hosts activities to improve the health condition of Polish society. Like all countries throughout the world, people in Poland have much to gain in enhancing their health through physical exercise. Poland is the fastest aging population in Europe, with 45% of all deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases and 26% caused by cancer. Although the Polish lifestyle has improved over the past decades (i.e., the number of smokers has decreased by 7% along with a 14% improvement in the prevalence of hypertension), these mortality rates are still alarmingly high.

The Walk for Health was organized by Dr. Anna Plucik-Mrozek, an Internal Medicine Specialist and President of the [Surprised by Age Foundation](#), and Małgorzata Perl, an expert fitness trainer and Vice-President of the Surprised by Age Foundation. This Walk, as part of the growing Exercise is Medicine® Poland initiative, has the support of many top Polish and foreign experts and institutions, including, but not limited to: the Ministry of Health in Poland, the [Fall in Love with Warsaw initiative](#), the Medical University of Warsaw, and the Polish Olympic Committee. The overall goal of the Walk for Health is to show cooperation between physicians and fitness trainers. To support this goal, the Polish Ministry of Health has declared their support for the initiative in an effort to further prevent chronic disease.



Participants at the Walk, some who were as old as 86 years of age, came with their families and met together at Skaryszewski Park to hear talks from a number of experts on the health benefits of walking in prolonging and improving our quality of life. Participants were treated to talks from the Polish Vice-Minister of Health, Dr. Jarosław Pinkas, and the Dean of the Medical University of Warsaw, Prof Mirośław Wielgos. Two prominent leaders in the field, Professor Adam Witowski from the Institute of Cardiology Warsaw and Professor Ewa Kozdroń, an advisory board member for EIM Poland and the department head of Tourism and Recreation at the Academy of Physical Education were also in attendance and joined the walk.. Participants

were first led through a dynamic warm-up by an international Bokwa trainer Rene Lomanga, who motivated the participants with positive energy, followed by a workshop on Nordic walking by Wojciech Świątek, who showed participants how to walk correctly and use their poles. A special thanks goes out to Beata Sadowska, who was a huge supporter of the effort from the very beginning!

Overall, the event organizers took great pleasure watching all the participants, young and old, having fun on the stage with Rene and the other speakers. Thanks to the support of the Polish Ministry of Health, a growing number of important institutions in Poland are learning about the developing Exercise is Medicine® initiative. The EIM message is growing throughout Poland with recent press conferences and stories making both the national newspapers and radio. Their end goal is to reach more individuals in Poland with the message that even 30 minutes of walking a day is enough to improve the quality of an individual's health and life.

Plans are now in place for next year to expand the event to even more participants – old and young – in multiple Polish cities at one time as everyone is invited to “Walk for your Health”!