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## TETANUS IN POLAND IN 2012

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### ABSTRACT

Despite of the small number of cases reported in Poland tetanus is a permanent risk to unvaccinated people. The severity of the disease is associated with high case fatality, especially among people in older age groups.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.** The aim of this paper is to present the data of epidemiological surveillance of tetanus in 2012.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS.** Principal source of the data is bulletin: “Infectious diseases and poisonings in Poland in 2012, and individual reports of cases of tetanus sent to the Department of Epidemiology, NIPH -NIH .

**RESULTS.** In 2012, there were reported 19 cases of tetanus. 6 cases occurred in men, and 13 women. 13 cases occurred in persons over 69 years of age and in those age groups 6 cases were fatal. The paper describes the geographical distribution and the month of infection, the nature of the wounds which were portals of infection and the duration of incubation period of the cases.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.** Severity of tetanus, despite a small number of cases each year leads to several deaths, which could be prevented by vaccination.

**Key words:** *tetanus, surveillance. Poland, 2012*

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### INTRODUCTION

For several decades, the epidemiological situation of tetanus in Poland is not markedly changed. Every year, there are reported several cases, and the differences in incidence between the years are most likely random. Infections occur in adults, who were not covered by the mandatory immunization program. In most cases, vaccination status of people with tetanus remains unknown. Few deaths from tetanus occur mostly in people from older age groups.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this paper is to present the data of epidemiological surveillance of tetanus in 2012, and to provide recommendations for prevention of tetanus.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

Material used in this study originates from the forms of individual notifications of cases of tetanus are sent to

the Department of Epidemiology, NIPH-NIH and from the newsletters “Infectious diseases and poisonings in Poland in 2012” and “Vaccinations in Poland”. The paper presents a tabular presentation of incidence and causality due to tetanus including time and geographical distribution of disease, age groups, and gender of patients.

### RESULTS

In 2012, there were reported 19 cases of tetanus in nine provinces (Tab. I). Compared to 2011 it was an increase of five cases. The highest number of cases (5 cases) were reported in the Malopolska province and in the region of Silesia (4 cases). Incidence per 100 000 for the whole country was 0.049 / 100,000 (Tab. I).

The age of all the patients was over 19. In the age group 20-69 the number of cases was 6 cases, and 13 cases were reported in the age of over 69. There have been six deaths among cases over 69. It was reported 13 cases among women and 6 cases among men. The number of deaths among men was 1, and 5 among women (Tab. II).



confirmation by the culture of *Clostridium tetani* was obtained in only one case. It concerned the fatal disease of 82 year old woman.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the last several years in Poland cases of tetanus occurred mostly in adults, especially in the elderly, usually after the age of 60. These are the age groups not covered by the compulsory vaccination and having a very low percentage of people vaccinated within the recommended vaccinations program. In addition to selected groups of professional soldiers and employees of the fire departments vaccination coverage of adults

in Poland remains low. The primary care physicians should encourage patients to be vaccinated at the recommended intervals of 10-years, particularly the people over 60 years of age, in whom course of tetanus can be particularly severe and can lead to death.

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