ABSTRACT

Title: Barefoot hiking in the Czech Republic

Objectives: The aim of this work is to assess the possibilities and position of barefoot

hiking in the Czech Republic.

Methods: The research part of the work is divided into two parts in order to meet

the objectives. The first is to determine the impacts of barefoot hiking on human health and to describe the profile of a barefoot hiker using

a questionnaire survey. The research lasted 11 weeks and involved 230

respondents, of which 147 (64%) are active barefoot tourists and 83

(36%) are respondents who are only interested in barefoot hiking.

Secondly, two semi-structured interviews were conducted - with

a barefoot physiotherapist about the effects of barefoot hiking on human

health and with a barefoot walking methodology specialist about

the development and position of this form of hiking.

Results: 64 % of the addressed barefoot hikers experience an overall improvement

in health in connection with barefoot hiking. 63 % of the surveyed

barefoot tourists put on shoes due to the cold only at temperatures below

10 °C. 13% even only at temperatures below -5 °C. 67 %

of the interviewed barefoot hikers prefer the length of barefoot trips up

to 10 km. 78% of the addressed barefoot hikers engage in barefoot hiking

only individually (not within any club). 53 % of the surveyed barefoot

hikers combine barefoot walking with using barefoot shoes. 93 % of the

respondents who described the surface of the forest road as unpleasant do

not actively engage in barefoot hiking. On the contrary, 89 % of the

respondents who described the surface of the forest road as excellent are

active barefoot hikers. The interviews highlighted the benefits of barefoot

walking and hiking and their growing popularity.

Conclusion: We have found that, with the exception of specific health

contraindications, barefoot hiking appears to be a healthy activity, which

is also confirmed by interviews with experts. The questionnaire shows

that most barefoot hikers feel better thanks to this form of hiking, they

are also more resistant to cold temperatures than the general population and are not hypersensitive to walking barefoot on various surfaces.

Keywords: Barefoot hiking, walking, outdoor activities, Czech Tourist Club, KCT