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THE ROLE OF RURAL MEDICINE INSTITUTE IN SHAPING OF POLISH FARMERS'
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Since 1951 the Institute has been involved in activities concerning general health of rural population in connection with assessment of the environment, working conditions and healthcare organisation.

Institute of Agricultural Medicine is a nationwide scientific institution, conducting scientific research as well as training activities and publishing, diagnostic, therapeutic, rehabilitation as well as assessment activities. Thanks to the concentration of all rural population health related issues in one research centre the Institute is able to develop comprehensive systemic solutions in this area.

The main goal of the research and development work conducted by the Institute is to minimise the level of professional health hazard and to improve the general health condition and the related quality of life of rural population, particularly including farmers.

On average in any reporting year, as many as 40 research programmes are conducted, including:

- Research of health hazards affecting rural population as a result of contact with hazardous biological factors present in the living and work environment.
- Research of pesticides' toxicity, environmental pollution in regions of intensive agricultural production as well as development of methods for labelling of pesticides.
- Assessment of the risk of muscular and skeletal system diseases and possible ergonomic solutions.
- Research and development as well as implementation works concerning accident rate and occupational health and safety in agriculture as well as hazard posed by physical factors in farmers' working environment.
- Works on hygienic and sanitary assessment of soils as well as organic and organic-mineral fertilisers used in agricultural production in the aspect of health hazard.
- Works on assessment of health needs and healthcare accessibility for rural population.
- Epidemiology, aetiopathogenesis and diagnostics of animal origin diseases, in the aspect of occupational hazard and danger for rural population, diagnostics of occupational diseases caused by aerogenic organic dusts as well as research of legionellosis.
- Work on hazards posed by asbestos fibres in the atmospheric air in rural environment, safe use, removal and disposing of asbestos products.

In 2009 two new scientific units were established within the Institute: Department of Molecular Biology and Independent Molecular Biology Laboratory.

Research and development tasks of these units involve biomedical research involving wide scope of issues concerning biology of cancers, neurobiology and nanotechnology.

The Institute also conducts assessment activities concerning occupational diseases in agriculture, including first instance assessment as well as nationwide cases of appeal.

The institute organises annual training courses and sessions in various areas of medicine.

Since 1999 the Agricultural Medicine Institute as the only research and development units and a public health clinic is authorised to offer specialisation courses in resident based system. Every third general practitioner has completed a specialisation at the Institute.

The publishing activity of the Institute includes the following periodicals: *Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine (AAEM)*, *Journal of Pre-Clinical and Clinical Research*, *Medycyna Ogólna (General Medicine)* and *Monografie Instytutowe (Institute Monographies)*.