HEALTH BENEFITS FROM CYCLING - USING THE HEALTH ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR CYCLING IN MACEDONIA

Abstract

The Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Macedonia conducted the initial assessment of the economic savings as a consequence of cycling among persons who regularly cycle in the capital city of Skopje in 2011. The sample of cyclists was very small and not representative (n=24), but still sufficient to promote the HEAT (Health Economic Assessment Tool) for cycling as valuable tool in the hands of public health professionals. The average age of the cyclists was 38.3 years with predominantly male participants. Since data on most of the cycling indicators in Macedonia is lacking, we only entered the minimum needed data on the number of trips per day and the average length of the trips. The default values given in the HEAT were employed for all the other parameters. Custom made questionnaire was sent to the cyclists and they were asked to provide data about their age, the reason for active cycling, the average number of daily trips with bicycle, and the average length of the trip. Most of them answered that they cycle as part of their sports and recreational activities (n=10), for pleasure (n=7), for cheap transport (n=5) and for training (n=2).

The average trips per day were 3. The mean annual benefit resulting from reduced mortality, for the examined population, resulted in EUR 45,000. For rather small number of participants and having in mind the figures about the Macedonian economy, this value should not be under estimated and should be seen as valuable initial indicator and strong encouragement for further research. That research should comprise larger sample of regular cyclists, particularly targeting the “cycle commuting population”.

Key words: health benefits, health economic assessment tool, cycling