Neighborhood in the perception of the Warsaw middle school students

AIMS
- to examine the changes in the students perception of informal social control (i.e. neighbours’ negative reaction on youth problem behaviours)
- the association between adolescent substance use (alcohol, nicotine, marihuana) and their perception of:
  1/ informal social control and
  2/ affluence and symptoms of physical and social problems in the neighbourhood.

METHOD
The self-report anonymous questionnaire completed during school lessons.

Initial sample included more than 3000 of adolescents who in the school year 2006/07 begun education in the Warsaw middle schools.
Classrooms were randomly selected from Warsaw public and non-public middle schools.

Data reported here were derived from Wave 1 (7th grade) and Wave 2 (8th grade) and Wave 3 (9th grade).
The analyzed sample included 1855 adolescents who participated in all three waves which constitutes about 60% response rate from Wave 1.

RESULTS

Most of Warsaw middle school students perceived their neighbourhoods as relatively affluent with little symptoms of physical and social problems. Perceived social control decreases during middle school years. Results of cross-sectional logistic regression conducted at Wave 3 data indicated that both of explanatory variables (perceived high level of social control and affluence) were found as protective factor for all adolescent drug-related behaviours.

CONCLUSION
Neighborhood factors are important component of the complex model of adolescents substance use. Results suggests that focusing prevention efforts on informal neighbours control may be beneficial.

Research supported by the Fogarty International Center, U.S. National Institute of Health, grant no 5R01TW007647