



# Medisea Newsletter



## Enhancing Health Awareness for Seafarers

At the Shipowners' Club, we recognise the impact that health and wellbeing have on our Members' operations. With that in mind, we are always considering ways to empower Members and seafarers with essential health knowledge delivered by our accredited Doctors.

We're excited to launch our first Medisea newsletter!

This edition focuses on

## **isolation at sea**

and understanding the psychological impact of

These initiatives form part of our Medisea scheme, which strives to promote better health outcomes, reduce medical claims, and enhance overall well-being for seafarers worldwide.

prolonged time away from family.

## The Role of Seafarers in Global Trade

Seafarers are responsible for possibly 80–90% total worldwide trade, numbering around 1.9 million, operating over 74,000 vessels. Among these, approx. 850,000 are officers and 1,050,000 ratings. One major challenge for seafarers is the prolonged isolation from family and friends.

## Isolation and its Impact on Mental Health

Being away for long and extended periods can cause loneliness, homesickness, and disconnection. This separation becomes even harder during family emergencies or significant life events which may impact the mental well-being of the seafarer.

Loneliness leads to emotional fatigue, burnout, elevated stress, anxiety, depression, and poor professional performance and output. Long contracts with unexpected prolongations, limited shore leave with shortened turnarounds, and poor digital connectivity (i.e. limited internet services) can have a major catalytic effect on increasing loneliness. The long working hours, confined working and living spaces, constant exposure to noise and vibration, cultural and language barriers with crews from different ethnicities heighten the stress, fatigue, and mental deprivation.



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## A Doctor's Recommendations

As a Maritime Doctor, I would make a few suggestions to address the problems mentioned:

- Providing opportunities for shore leave and recreational activities.
- Fostering a positive team spirit and encouraging open communication.
- Access to better internet on board offers a solution on a number of fronts. Not only can crew better access online resources available to them, including therapy services, but they can also stay in touch with their loved ones at home. Greater

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internet bandwidth is desired, and also internet could be provided free, or at nominal charges only.

- Appreciating mental strain/emotional fatigue, anxiety depression in seafarers should be taught to senior officers e.g., Master etc.
- Also provisions of daily news bulletins and a regular supply of documentary style magazine.
- Flexibility- in length of contracts, and in periods of leave between contracts.
- Since Women seafarers are more susceptible to social isolation than male counterparts-more than one female seafarers to be employed on the same voyage.
- Video recordings of major sports+ news events worldwide should be made available.
- Continuity of employment would avoid stress of uncertainty and also help crews forge longer-term bonds if working together more than once.

## Towards a safer and More Fulfilling Seafaring Career

The mental health challenges faced by seafarers are complex and widespread but loneliness are key contributors to poor health and wellbeing. Through better understanding and awareness the Club hopes to improve cases of loneliness at sea, making the profession more pleasant, safe and fulfilling.

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