



WORKING FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

Seafarers Health

Health and access to health care among merchant seafarers and fishermen of working age based in the UK

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Background to the study

- ‘Supporting seafarers and their families’
 - Commissioned by the Maritime Charities Funding Group
 - Wide ranging report
 - For health:
 - Majority of seafarers used local NHS rather than the Dreadnought Medical Service (an NHS service)
 - Vast majority (93%) of fishermen were not aware of the Dreadnought
 - Recommended further research

Study Overview

- Study consisted of
 - Literature review
 - Analysis of existing data
 - Questionnaire survey of seafarers
 - Focus groups
 - Questionnaire survey of Dreadnought Medical Service patients

Literature Review - Highlights

- Fatal accident rate
 - 12 times higher (Merchant Navy) and 52 times higher (Fishermen) than general British workforce.
- Non-fatal accidents
 - Most common = hands & wrists, head & face, and back
- Cancer
 - Fishermen – lip and stomach cancers
 - Merchant Navy – lung and alcohol-related cancers
- Dental
 - Problems accessing dental treatment

Analysis of Existing Data

- Dreadnought Medical Service
 - Inpatients
 - Outpatients
 - Anonymised data
 - Limitations
- Maritime Coastguard Agency medicals
 - ENG certification medicals

MCA Medicals

- Temporarily unfit/restricted certificates
 - Hypertension, urinary abnormalities, obesity and diabetes
 - Potentially reversible
- Failures
 - Joint diseases/replacement and cardiac events

Dreadnought data results

- Number of patients and appointments

	Inpatient	Outpatient
Patients	809	585
Admissions/Appts	1,371	1,195

- Majority of inpatients and outpatients were from England
 - 83% inpatients
 - 87% outpatients

Dreadnought data results (2)

- Trauma and Orthopaedics – highest specialty for outpatients and inpatients

	Inpatients	Outpatients
Working Age	24%	37%
Over-Working Age	29%	28%

- Over-working age
 - Most commonly seen for urology and cardiology compared to working age

Questionnaire Survey - Methodology

- Original aim
 - Obtain 500-700 responses
 - Assuming response rate of 25% planned to send out approximately 3,000 questionnaires
- Issues
 - Finding the seafarers
 - Getting the questionnaire to them
 - Encouraging them to participate

Finding the seafarers

- List of seafarer organisations
 - Unions (Nautilus International, RMT)
 - Ferry Companies (Calmac, P&O, Stena)
 - Fishermen's organisations (RNMDSF, SFO, NFFO, SWFPA, SFF)
 - Others (MCA, Chamber of Shipping)
- Initial contact asked for help with distribution and asked
 - Web or paper
 - Number able to distribute to
 - Whether able to differentiate between UK and non-UK

Getting the questionnaire to seafarers - Paper

- Fishermen
 - 3,000 – Fishing News
 - 1,000 – NFFO
 - 70 each to 15 missions – RNMDSF
- Merchant Navy
 - 2,500 – Nautilus International
- 200 Other request for paper questionnaires
 - **Total Paper – Over 7,500**

Getting the questionnaire to seafarers - Web

- Merchant Navy
 - 8,500 – Nautilus International Union
 - 3,686 – RMT Union
 - 1,000 – Calmac and Northlink ferries
- Fishermen
 - 190 – SWFPA
- **Total Web-links – Over 13,000**

Publicising the questionnaire survey

- Newspaper articles
 - Fishing News (2 articles)
 - Nautilus Telegraph (2 articles)
 - RMT News (1 article)
- Other
 - Webpage on IOM site with link to web-questionnaire
 - SFO – hosted link to IOM seafarers website
 - RNMDSF – posters in mission centres
 - P&O – short article in staff magazine

Questionnaire Survey Results

- 1,264 responses - 1,215 used in analysis
 - 1,035 Merchant Navy
 - 180 Fishermen
- Higher proportion of older seafarers than in general seafarer population
- Only 21 females responded, 1 worked in the fishing fleet

Questionnaire Survey Results (2)

- 56% (n=675) reported having an injury or illness which prevented them from working
- Back and neck problems & broken bones were most common injury/illness categories

	Fishermen	Merchant Navy
Back & neck	25%	13%
Broken bones	15%	17%

Questionnaire Survey Results (3)

- 97% sought professional treatment
 - 57% from GP
 - 22% from A&E
- 69% (n=464) were referred elsewhere
 - 66% to local NHS
 - 15% to the Dreadnought
 - 14% to private health care

Questionnaire Survey Results (4)

- Awareness of the Dreadnought
 - 47% of Fishermen aware of the Dreadnought
 - 85% of Merchant Navy aware of the Dreadnought
- Attending the Dreadnought
 - 9% of Fishermen had ever attended the Dreadnought
 - 23% of Merchant Navy had ever attended the Dreadnought

Focus Groups

- Purpose
 - In-depth investigation of health care experiences
- Recruitment
 - Willing participants from the working-age questionnaire
 - Held in four locations around the UK at times to suit majority of respondents
- Conducting
 - Developed question set with open-ended questions
 - Individual responses

Focus groups - results

- Majority felt they had been given a good level of care but not a priority service
- Barriers in setting up appointments
 - Work schedule
 - Location
 - Dental
- Main reasons seafarers did not attend the Dreadnought
 - GP unaware of the Dreadnought
 - Distance (esp. from Scotland) from the Dreadnought

Dreadnought survey

- Purpose
 - Investigate experiences of Dreadnought patients
- Methods
 - Ethics
 - Survey sent out by the Dreadnought – study team had no medical records or contact details
 - Sent out to random sample of 575 Dreadnought patients

Dreadnought survey - Results

- 186 responses – response rate of 38%
 - 55% retired seafarers
 - 31% working seafarers
 - 8% dependants of seafarers
 - 6% other occupational groups
- Orthopaedics most common injury/illness (24%)
- Vast majority satisfied with the level of care at the Dreadnought

Conclusions

- Trauma and orthopaedics most common injury/illness category
- Majority sought treatment through the local NHS
 - Minority went through Dreadnought or private health care in hopes of returning to work faster
- Difficulties in setting up appointments was the main barrier in seeking care
- Vast majority of those who have attended the Dreadnought were satisfied with the service and would attend again in the future

Thanks for listening

