

HealthWatch™

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Commercial Shipping Vessels Benefit from Medical Advisory Services

The very nature of commercial shipping places professional mariners in remote locations all over the world. So, when a medical emergency strikes it is most often fellow crewmembers who are first to respond.

In the past, training and equipment would be all that those crewmembers could rely

on. However, with advancements in communications and the advent of the Internet and email, ships now have the ability to consult immediate medical advice from thousands of miles away.

“Even if you have a person on board with a higher degree of medical training and access to more sophisticated equipment, it

is important to have medical intelligence available when it is needed,” said Joan Sullivan Garrett, MedAire’s president and CEO. “It is a resource that provides shipping companies with peace of mind from knowing a proven process is in place to deal with a calamity.”

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Safety Spotlight

Possible Food Poisoning

Actual Situation: MedLink receives a patch from a captain during a port stop in Mallorca, Spain. The captain reports that a young male crewmember has been complaining of sudden abdominal cramps, diarrhea and a headache. The crewmember also has redness and swelling of the face, is anxious and sweating.

After analyzing the situation, the MedLink physician discovers that the crewmember ingested an unknown type of fish about 30 minutes ago and that the fish may have been left out on the deck for up to two hours before it was filleted. The crewmember has no significant medical history, medications or allergies.

Result: The MedLink physician recommends that the crewmember be administered 50mg of Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) by mouth. If vomiting prevents oral administration, then it will need to be given by an injection into the muscle.

After following up to find out the patient’s condition, MedLink learned that the crewmember’s condition improved. No diversion or evacuation was necessary. The crewmember was likely suffering from Scombroid Poisoning. This condition will closely resemble an allergic reaction but is due to the ingestion of “histamine” from the fish as opposed to the

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Medical Kits Exceed MCA Regulations

Charter and red-flagged operators that must adhere to standards approved by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) can now utilize a system of medical kits that not only meets MCA standards, but exceeds them with additional pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

MedLink has developed a tiered system of medical and first aid kits that allow operators to choose the type of medical supplies necessary for any voyage. Kits range from the lightweight and durable Ship-to-Shore kit to the Ship’s Medicine Chest, a comprehensive medical kit intended for longer voyages and blue water activity.



MedLink’s tiered system of medical kits exceeds regulations set forth by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

Managing Allergic Reactions from an Offshore Sting

While allergic reactions are not specific to the offshore setting, it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms and offer appropriate treatment.

Many mariners will suffer an allergic reaction as a result of a venomous sting. This can include jellyfish stings and fire coral, but bee stings are perhaps the most frequent, and you’ll find many bees along with wasps and yellow jackets around the boatyard.

When treating a life-threatening allergic reaction, your immediate focus should be on airway management and combating the allergic response. The most effective method in treating a life-threatening allergic reaction is to administer epinephrine (adrenaline). This will help primarily with the respiratory component and will also deter many of the allergic responses.

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Many victims of severe allergies will carry a device known as an “Epi-Pen.” This device looks like a large fountain pen and allows the patient to easily administer a pre-set dose of epinephrine. The patient simply removes the safety cover and plunges the short needle into the skin, usually the arm or thigh. The effect is usually quite noticeable, but it may also be temporary and medical help should be sought as soon as possible. Benadryl, an antihistamine, is another useful agent to suppress some of the allergic responses following the injection.

An important point to remember about allergic reactions is that most patients with severe responses know about their condition and make great efforts to avoid the allergens. If someone on board your vessel is suffering from an allergic reaction, be sure to contact MedLink for more detailed guidance from an emergency physician.

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MedLink makes this expert medical advice available through its Global Response Center. From there, board-certified emergency physicians are working 24/7 to ensure the situation is managed properly. If more sophisticated medical care is required, the hospital-based center has access to medical specialists in nearly every field of medicine and can coordinate air evacuation and repatriation.

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New MedLink Program Expands to Cover all Corporate Travelers

For years, MedLink has been managing the health and security needs of Fortune 1000 senior executives as they vacation on board their luxury yachts. Now, those services are expanding to provide the entire corporation’s international business travelers and expatriates with a single resource for all medical, security and travel assistance needs.

The new program, GlobalLifeline, utilizes the technology infrastructure of MedAire’s 24-hour Global Response Center to coordinate and manage international assistance, from immediate physician consultation, access to western medicine clinics and medical evacuations to expert security advice and legal referrals.

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release of histamine from our own cells.

MedLink Advice: Always ensure that medications and other prescription drugs are kept up-to-date and have not expired. In cases of possible food poisoning where vomiting has occurred, offer clear non-alcoholic liquids or ice chips to prevent dehydration. In severe cases, IV fluids may be required.

To receive Maritime *HealthWatch* electronically, please contact Brant Galloway at bgallow@medaire.com.

This newsletter is also available online at www.medaire.com.