

Stats Reveal Most Common In-flight Medical Emergencies

According to MedAire's 2000 statistics, calls made for in-flight medical emergencies have reached all-time highs, with the most common medical category being vasovagal – a dizziness/fainting episode.

The stats summarize more than 8,500 medical calls that were managed last year in the company's MedLink Emergency Telemedicine Center. Among those calls, the top in-flight medical categories were:

- 1) **Vasovagal** (fainting) 21.4%
- 2) **Gastrointestinal** 14.4%
- 3) **Cardiac** 12.2%
- 4) **Respiratory** 11%
- 5) **Neurological** 9.7%

MedAire's president and CEO, Joan Sullivan Garrett, says that while the top five categories have remained very similar to what she has seen throughout MedAire's 15-year history, the percentage of gastrointestinal incidents has increased by about 40 percent from previous years.

Garrett attributes the overall rise of in-flight medical incidents to the increasing average age of travelers, stress and that people are becoming so comfortable with air travel that they attempt trips with complete disregard for any existing medical conditions they might have.

"Many in-flight medical situations can look quite similar and seem scary to pilots and flight

(Continued Next Page)

REPORT: Most People Survive Airline Accidents

A report released by the National Transportation Safety Board says that after airline accidents, most passengers survive.

The report, which surveyed more than 500 accidents, found that 51,207 occupants survived and 2,280 died – a 95 percent survivor rate. With such statistics, it is not surprising that a number of airlines are now looking to MedAire for help managing the care and needs of accident survivors.

"Once survivors are taken to surrounding medical facilities it becomes very difficult for an airline to keep track of everyone and ensure their needs and best interests

(Continued Next Page)

Safety Spotlight

Medical Situation: Drug Overdose

Actual Situation: A 28-year-old-male passenger en route from Sydney to Los Angeles is unconscious and unresponsive. The passenger was observed taking an unknown quantity of Flunitrazepam (a sedative drug) and consuming alcohol, prompting the flight crew to call MedLink.

MedLink consults with its poison control center and discovers that the drug, more commonly known as Rohypnol, is banned in the U.S. and may have a dangerous interaction with alcohol.

The MedLink physician advises the flight crew to stimulate the passenger with ice-cold water or by sternal rub and then place him on oxygen. The physician also advises that if an attempt to

arouse the passenger is unsuccessful, the flight should be diverted to nearby Honolulu where emergency response units would be waiting.

Result: The passenger awakens and is alert. After a few minutes, he is able to stand and walk through the cabin. MedLink asks the flight crew to continue monitoring the passenger and provide him with supplemental oxygen.

MedAire Advice: Be cautious of the drugs passengers may acquire while traveling internationally. If health concerns related to alcohol or drug abuse arise, contact MedLink immediately. MedLink physicians have immediate access to nearly every field of medicine, including a poison control center.

Did You Know...

More passengers are reporting in-flight stomach problems than ever before and although the most common in-flight medical emergency for commercial airlines is still vasovagal (fainting), digestive-related problems have increased by about 40 percent over the past four years.

In fact, gastrointestinal illnesses are the second most common in-flight medical emergency, representing 14.4% of all in-flight medical incidents.

Inflight Emergencies (Continued from Page 1).

attendants,” says Garrett. “Our physicians understand the unique effects altitude can have on any medical situation in this remote setting and they apply this knowledge when recommending care.”

While the top five in-flight medical emergencies represent more than 68 percent of all in-flight medical situations, other medical categories include:

acute allergic reactions, substance abuse, trauma, endocrine, burns, infectious disease, orthopedic, vascular, dental and psychiatric.

MedAire, MedAire Europe and MedLink are registered trademarks. “Expert care, everywhere.” is a trademark of MedAire, Inc. © 2001 MedAire, Inc.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Accident Report (Continued from Page 1)

are being properly attended to,” said Linda Young, MedAire’s vice president of operations. “It becomes even more difficult when an incident occurs in another country.”

MedAire’s survivor management program provides airlines with the medical resources needed to properly manage the care of survivors any where in the world.

These services may be helpful to airlines as Safety Board statistics show that unless the current accident rate is decreased, the number of airline accidents will increase

and so will the number of survivors who need immediate medical care.

The Safety Board, noting that the airline industry has seen booming passenger growth, included with the report recommendations to speed up evacuations.

During the 16-year period that the report covered, from 1983 to 2000, the number of airline passengers more than doubled to 640 million. By 2010, projections indicate nearly 1 billion passengers will travel on U.S. airliners alone.

For more information on the survivor management program, please contact MedAire.

We Want to Hear from You...

MedAire welcomes your questions, concerns and articles.

If you would like to receive Commercial *HealthWatch* electronically, please contact Brant Galloway at bgallow@medaire.com.

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

PRSRRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PHOENIX,
AZ
PERMIT NO. 3

MedAire, Inc.
1301 E. McDowell Rd., Ste. 204
Phoenix, AZ 85006

