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CYCLE 5: WEEKS 13 - 15

1. Rates and occupational characteristics of international seafarers with mental illness

R Y Lefkowitz, M D Slade, C A Redlich
Occupational Medicine, Volume 69, Issue 4, June 2019, Pages 279–282, <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqz069>
Published: 16 May 2019

Background

Seafarers enable 90% of global commerce, working in isolation from social support and medical care. While occupational conditions of isolation may suggest possible excess risk of mental illness and suicide, research on seafarer mental illness is limited.

Aims

To describe seafarers with mental illness and associated incidence rates in a large population of international seafarers.

Methods

We used mental illness claims data from a large international marine insurance provider arising from working seafarers during the years 2007–15. We used descriptive statistics and calculated mental illness incidence rates in this seafarer population.

Results

There were 278 seafarer mental illness claims in the study data. Claims were more often reported in deck workers (46%) and ratings (58%). The crude mental illness rate was 3.9 per 100 000 person-years.

Access article here:

<https://academic.oup.com/occmed/article/69/4/279/5490033?login=true>

2. Seafarers' mental health and wellbeing

Sampson, Helen, and Neil Ellis. "Seafarers' mental health and wellbeing." IOSH (2019).

This research has sought to provide fresh insight into the issue of seafarers' mental ill health. Existing studies have been hampered by the difficulties associated with accessing sufficient information about international seafarer populations and their mental health status to allow for comparisons to be made with other workers and/or over time.

This research adopted a different approach to the issue and sought to clarify whether mental ill health among seafarers is considered to be a significant problem by key stakeholders; what factors seafarers identify as supporting or undermining mental health and wellbeing on board cargo ships; and what policies and practices could be implemented by ship operators in order to provide better support for seafarers' mental health and wellbeing.

The research combined the use of questionnaires, interviewer-administered questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and an analysis of secondary data provided by insurance companies (known as P&I clubs). The study concluded that seafarers' mental health and wellbeing is of considerable concern to maritime charities, employer associations and trade unions. It is, however, regarded as a less pressing problem by employers. The research found that seafarers and some employers advocate proactive measures to improve the shipboard communications infrastructure and available recreational facilities, seafarers' employment

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terms and conditions and physical health in support of better mental health and wellbeing on board. These measures are likely to be more effective in improving happiness and mental health and wellbeing on board than current reactive strategies (e.g. the provision of counselling to seafarers) and self-help strategies targeted at seafarers.

Access report here:

<https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/127214/1/seafarers-mental-health-wellbeing-full-report.pdf>