

**“EQUITY IN MARITIME HEALTH AND SAFETY” –
PRESENTATION OF THE 9TH INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM ON MARITIME HEALTH
ESBJERG, DENMARK, 3-6 JUNE 2007**

MARIA JEŻEWSKA, BOGDAN JAREMIN

The City of Esbjerg in Denmark was playing host to the 9th International Symposium on Maritime Health. Debates with the headline “Equity in Maritime Health and Safety – development through research, cooperation and education” took place on 3-6 June in Musikhuset Esbjerg, combining both the Congress Centre and Museum of Modern Art.

Dr Per Sabro Nielsen, the Chairman of the 9th ISMH, was the head of the Danish National Organizing Committee. Professor M.L. Canals from Spain chaired the International Scientific Committee.

As usual, the symposium was held under the patronage of the International Maritime Health Association in collaboration with WHO, ILO, IMO, ITF, Danish Maritime Authority and other organizations, including the City of Esbjerg – the maritime capital of Denmark.

During four-day debates several interesting lectures were presented. 8 parallel sessions, 6 workshops and 2 poster sessions were held. The Symposium gathered 144 active participants and almost equal number of observers, invited guests and others.

Poland was represented by Bogdan Jaremin, MD, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Maria Jeżewska, PhD, and Irena Leszczyńska, PhD – all from the Clinic of Occupational and Internal Diseases of the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine, Medical University of Gdańsk.

The issues focused on Equity in Maritime Health and Safety embraced such problems as Health of Seafarers – social and economic aspects, Education and Health Promotion, or Occupational Injury at Sea. The following issues were dealt with in

detail: Seafarers' Fatigue, Social Security for Seafarers, Maritime Health Care System, Fitness for Duty, Occupational Risks, Telemedicine, Occupational Accidents, Infectious Diseases. Lectures given by Doctor T. Carter: "Who wants equity in maritime health? Who needs it?" and Professor A. Smith: "Seafarers' Fatigue", were especially interesting.

Parallel discussions concerned psycho-social factors of working at sea. Presentations embracing local, national, as well as international maritime health promotion programmes were also of importance, e.g. Doctor H. Saarni's "Health promotion among Finnish seafarers – trimmare project" and R.C. Verbist's "The seafarers' health information programme – current status". The Polish team took part in this discussion presenting "Training of Leaders in Maritime Health Promotion" (oral). In addition, we prepared a presentation "Assessment of Cardiovascular Health Risk as Prognostic Indicator of Fitness for Work in Periodic Examinations of Seafarers" (oral) and "Work-Related Stress at Sea: Self-Estimation by Maritime Students and Officers" (poster).

All presentations were at a high level and were strictly related to the issues of maritime medicine and related fields of science. Moreover, attention was devoted to psychological, social and legal problems involved in seafarers' work. The system of recruitment and training of seafarers, as well as support for their families were discussed extensively, thus reflecting a great concern for people working at sea.

The organizers spared no efforts to ensure efficient debates and warm atmosphere to the participants. Much weight was attached to social and cultural events during the Symposium. A great concern of the Organizers about high scientific and social level is worth mentioning, since informal meetings make our community still more consolidated, resulting in cooperation between countries and exchange of ideas and knowledge.

The opening ceremony, held in Esbjerg Academy of Music, will for long be remembered as also will be the visit to the Esbjerg Fisheries and Maritime Museum with the concert of the Danish seafarers choir, Symposium Venue and Gala Dinner.

The General Assembly of IMHA was a very important event. New IMHA Board of Directors were elected. Dr Nebojsa Nikolic from Croatia (Faculty of Maritime Studies, Rijeka) was elected the President of IMHA. The past President of IMHA, Dr Tim Carter, summed up his two-year term of office and expressed his thanks for collaboration. By the decision of the General Assembly a new advisory body, the IMHA Steering Committee, was set up to solve older and new organizational problems, including those related with IMHA maintenance costs. The discussions concerned financial problems of the Association, as well as changes in meetings and the way of communication between the Board members as regards the current issues. All priorities

of the IMHA activities were indicated. It was also announced that a textbook „International Medical Guide for Ships” written by the IMHA members will still this year appear in print under the auspices of the WHO.

The Closing Session included the handover of the IMHA flag. The 10th International Symposium on Maritime Health will be held in Goa, India, in 2009. Doctor Suresh Idnani, the Chairman of ISMH10, was happy to hear the news and cordially invited all future participants to India.

On closing the debates, Doctor Per Sabro Nielsen, Chairman of the 9th ISMH, expressed his warmest thanks to all participants and encouraged to further research and activities aimed at health promotion of maritime workers.

On behalf of the management of the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine in Gdynia Dr Jaremin awarded Doctor J. Carter, the past IMHA President, Doctor N. Nikolic, newly elected IMHA President, and Doctor P. S. Nielsen, the organizer of the 9th ISMH, with commemorative medals, for their contribution to the development of maritime medicine and the Association.

1. Ref.: Book of Abstracts, 9th International Symposium on Maritime Health, 3-6 June 2007, Esbjerg, Denmark.