

The role of nurses in global maritime health

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The maritime industry is one of the most important contributors to the global economy. Maritime workers or seafarers are essential to the global economy with as many as 1.5 million personnel working to ensure the safe and efficient transportation of more than 90% of the goods that move across the globe [1]. Despite this immense contribution, the health of the seafarers has not been given a deserving attention. While seafarers' treatment has been improved significantly in many countries, particularly developed countries; seafarers are still facing health issues, such as long working hours, insufficient nutrition, lack of recreation and poor mental health [2]. Global maritime health comprises health workers from different disciplines, among which nursing is an integral part; as nurses are involved in health care promotion of seafarers. Nurses play a role in all aspects of the work cycle of seafarers from pre-employment medical examination of the seafarers to their health on board.

Keeping ship crews mentally and physically healthy is a challenge due to the nature of the job [1]. Therefore, the maritime nurses could assist with promoting and maintaining the mental and physical wellbeing of the crews by educating the crew members on activities such as physical exercise, recreational activities and adequate sleep, which can positively impact their physical and mental wellbeing.

Inherent in their work, seafarers have a high rate of occupational accidents [3]. Merchant shipping is an occupation with a high rate of fatal accidents [4]. These accidents especially on the deck result in many injuries that can be fatal to the seafarers. These accidents can result from slip and falls, compressed air accident, chemical exposure, crane and lifting gear accident and electrical accidents [4]. In this regard, nurses could assist the occupational health physician in the provision of accident prevention guidelines and treatments for injuries sustained in the ships. They can educate crews on the health benefits of using personal protective equipment such as goggles, boots, helmets,

gloves and proper lifting techniques in their various areas of operations.

With the possibility of significant self-medication practices with medicines, including antibiotics, among seafarers since medications are allowed on board [5], nurses' role in antibiotic stewardship within the maritime industry can be very crucial. They can assist in minimising antimicrobial resistance among the seafarers and aquatic lives by the use of best practice in antibiotic medications.

Nurses' role in global maritime health therefore, can never be overemphasised as they are involved in promoting the health care of seafarers. Integration of maritime nursing curriculum in the various nursing institutions across the globe should therefore, be advocated. More nurses should be trained in maritime health in order to support healthy changes in practice within the maritime industry. They should also be trained in global maritime health research and actively involved in maritime associations such as the International Maritime Health Association. This can help them further understand the health issues and health needs of seafarers and hence, provide evidence-based care for better health promotion among the seafarers.

Conflict of interest: None declared

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Received: 5.11.2022 Accepted: 30.11.2022

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2021; 72(3): 241–242, doi: [10.5603/IMH.2021.0045](https://doi.org/10.5603/IMH.2021.0045), indexed in Pubmed: [34604997](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34604997/).