

**Internat. Marit. Health, 2005, 56, 1 - 4**

**8th INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MARITIME HEALTH  
Rijeka, Croatia, 8 – 13 May 2005**

The 8th International Symposium on Maritime Health was held in Rijeka, Croatia, on 8-13 May 2005. It was organized by the Institute of Public Health Rijeka, the International Maritime Health Association, the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Rijeka, the Croatian Institute of Occupational Medicine, and the Croatian Maritime, Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society of the Croatian Medical Association.

As the previous Symposium, 8th ISMH was supported by the International Labour Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Transport Workers' Federation, and for the first time by the International Organization for Migration.

Altogether, there were 310 participants, including 38 accompanying persons and 15 medical students from the University of Rijeka. The symposium was conducted on board of the traditional Croatian cruise ship, MS Dalmacija (Fig.1).

226 papers were presented : 181 in sessions on board ship and in a closely situated conference hall on shore, and 45 papers in a poster session held on a promenade deck of the ship.

The scientific program of the symposium was organised in the following way: oral presentations were made during the first three days of the meeting, and on the last day 7 workshops were held, with the aim of proposing solutions for a number of key maritime topics, including those presented during the first 3 days.

The majority of international participants from 39 countries came on board m/s Dalmacija on Sunday 8 May in Venice, and enjoyed the welcome reception there during the ship's departure to Rijeka.

The official opening ceremony took place on Monday 9 May in the Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka. The speakers who welcomed the participants were representatives of the above mentioned Organizations and Associations, of the Croatian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, of the University of Rijeka, the County and the City of Rijeka. In this session, representatives of IMHA and editors, Dr. Rob Verbist and Dr. Bas Riiken, handed over the draft of the new 'International Medical Guide for

Ships' to Dr. Gerry Eijkemans, Occupational and Environmental Health Programme, World Health Organization.

In the evening of 9 May, the Mayor of the City of Rijeka invited the participants for a reception at Governor's Palace in Rijeka.

The slogan of the meeting was "Maritime Medicine: A Global Challenge", and its main topics were: international collaboration in maritime health, unequal status of multiethnic crews internationally recruited, injuries and diseases of seafarers, medical facilities for seafarers in different countries, behaviour and lifestyle of seafarers, maritime occupational health, HIV / AIDS and seafarers, fatigue problems, travel medicine, management of health risks for crews of ships and hygiene, underwater and hyperbaric medicine including psychological problems, telemedicine, medical care on board, and challenges facing ship doctors nowadays.

One of the aims of the Organizing Committee was to bring the symposium closer to the field of travel medicine which was somehow left out from programmes of the previous meetings which were dominated by occupational health subjects. Therefore, distinguished invited speakers from the International Society of Travel Medicine were invited, and they presented topics of interest to maritime medicine and participated in workshops on the last day of the conference.

The pharmaceutical industry showed interest in the work of this symposium and NovoNordisk company held a very successful meeting on the possible use of the recombinant clotting factor VIIa in the cases of severe bleeding on board ship. The world's top expert in the field, Prof. Uri Martinowitz from Israel chaired that meeting.

The long list of topics and presentations highlighted a large variety of maritime medical problems. A number of very interesting papers were presented. During discussions it was indicated that the practical approach to various such problems was different in various countries, and that there is a need for further collaborative research aimed at finding solutions.

The workshops of the last day covered the following subjects: the new edition of the International Medical Guide for Ships, the use of defibrillators / AEDs on board merchant ships (different opinions were presented), the medical training and education of ship's officers, chemoprophylaxis of malaria for seafarers, and the still very different criteria for assessing the fitness of seafarers for work at sea.

During this international meeting held on board ship, there were opportunities for many personal contacts between doctors from various countries, and for friendly exchange of experiences and opinions. This was highly appreciated by participants.

On 10 May, IMHA had its 5th General Meeting and the members of the new Board were elected.

During the last two days of the symposium m/s Dalmacija brought the participants from Rijeka to Dubrovnik, the pearl of the Adriatic Sea, and from there back via Rijeka to Venice.

The next 9th International Symposium on Maritime Health will be held in Esbjerg, Denmark, on 3-6 June 2007.

Dr. Nebojša Nikolić  
Chairman of the 8th ISMH



Fig.1 The Ship m/s Dalmacija