

Establishment of the International Maritime Health Foundation: the next step in scientific publishing in maritime health

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ABSTRACT

The *Bulletin of the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine (IMTM)* was published first time in 1948 as a preliminary publication. Since then it has developed and from 1999 it is known as *International Maritime Health (IMH)*. Initially it was published by the *Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine (IMTM)* in Gdynia. From 2009 it was published by the *Polish Society of Maritime, Tropical and Travel Medicine (PSMTTM)* in cooperation with the *International Maritime Health Association (IMHA)* and the *Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine (NCMM)*, later the *Norwegian Centre for Maritime and Diving Medicine (NCMDM)* at the *Department of Occupational Medicine, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen*. After a couple of years of planning and discussions on how to take the journal forward, the *International Maritime Health Foundation (IMHF)* was established under Polish Law, 21st June 2018. This article discusses the process from the very beginning of the journal, until the establishment of the *IMHF* as well as the foundation's objectives and way forward.

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THE BULLETIN OF THE INSTITUTE OF MARITIME AND TROPICAL MEDICINE (IMTM) 1949–1999

At the beginning, all articles were in Polish with abstracts in English, Russian and French. In 1955, one issue of 292 pages was published in 690 copies. Since 1956, the journal was published twice a year. It covered maritime occupational health, fisheries, divers, dockworkers, yard workers, waste

and sewage handling, hygiene topics and communicable diseases imported by ships and international travellers.

In the 60s and 70s, the journal was a quarterly publication. After the second International Symposium on Maritime Medicine (ISMM) in 1966 and 6th ISMM in 1974, special editions were published.

Following the formation of International Maritime Health Association (IMHA) in 1997, during the 4th International



Symposium on Maritime Health (ISMH) in Oslo, discussions on a possible cooperation between IMHA and the IMTM commenced, resulting in a cooperation from 1999.

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME HEALTH 1999–2009

From 1999, a cooperation between IMHA and the IMTM on the publishing of the International Maritime Health (IMH) was established. The journal was then solely in the English language, with an international editorial board with members from 31 countries.

At the general meeting of IMHA during the 6th ISMH in Manila in 2001, it became clear, however, that there still was mistrust between environments of maritime medicine in Western and Eastern Europe. Following disputes at the GM the cooperation broke down.

For the next years, until 2007, IMH was again published by the IMTM, without the cooperation with IMHA. The lack of their 'own' endorsed scientific journal led to a loss of members in IMHA, and they sought possible solutions to this. At the same time, the IMTM sought new partners.

In the period 2007–2009, discussions of a tripartite solution were held, between the IMH, IMHA and the NCMM. A tripartite agreement on the publishing of the scientific journal IMH was signed during the International Congress of Maritime, Tropical and Travel Medicine in Gdynia, June 2009.

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME HEALTH 2009–2018

Based on the agreement of 2009, a relation to Via Medica as a professional publisher was established. The journal design was modernised, and since then, the journal has been published as an open source journal, although printed in paper for subscribers, or sent as a pdf at the time of publication to pdf-subscribers. The Editors-in-Chief from the beginning until today are listed in Table 1.

THE NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH

There are many scientific journals around in an increasing number, but none of these – except for the IMH – specialised on maritime health, indexed and in English. The financial situation of the IMH, however, has been challenging for years, mainly due to a low number of subscriptions. On several occasions, external grants have been necessary for the journal to be continued. Besides the Norwegian Centre for Maritime and Diving Medicine (NCMDM) and IMHA, grants have been received from the ITF Seafarers Trust, the German Society for Maritime Medicine and the Norwegian Association of Maritime Medicine. The organisations cooperating on the publication of the journal had the view that efforts should be made to establish a solid financial basis for its publication.

Table 1. Names of editors and their period of editing the IMH

Period-of-office	Name of Editor-in-Chief
1948–1954	Professor Jerzy Morzycki (1905–1954)
1954–1955	Professor Stefan Kryński (1914–2009)
1956–1972	Professor Zenon Buczowski (1909–1974)
1972–1986	Professor Franciszek Bławat (1911–1987)
1986–1989	Professor Roman Dolmierski (1916–1998)
1990–2006	Professor Stanisław Tomaszunas (1927–2011)
2006–2013	Professor Bogdan Jaremin (1942–)
2013–	Assoc. Professor Maria Jeżewska (1959–)

The organisations that either had been involved in the tripartite agreement of 2009 or had been involved as providers of external funds to the journal, were invited to discussions on how to move on to a next step. A proposal from the NCMDM to establish a foundation under Polish Law was well received and discussions started. The foundation should be the owner of the journal and have a main task to secure a solid financial basis for the journal. After some preliminary discussions, three parties wanted to move on with the discussions to establish a foundation. These were the Polish Society of Maritime, Tropical and Travel Medicine (PSMTTM), the Norwegian Association for Maritime Medicine, and the Haukeland University Hospital, represented by its NCMDM at the Department of Occupational Medicine.

OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME HEALTH FOUNDATION (IMHF)

It was important to the founders that the basis for the IMHF should be as close to the principles of the agreement of 2009 as possible. Based on legal advice, the IMHF was given broader objectives than only the publishing of the IMHF, because a too narrow objective could result in court rejection of an application for registration.

The objectives of the foundation are described in § 5 of the Statutes – see Frame 1.

Frame 1. The objectives of the International Maritime Health Foundation (IMHF)

“The objective of the IMH Foundation is to act for the development of science, to increase and disseminate knowledge of maritime medicine and adjacent fields, such as: naval medicine, underwater and hyperbaric medicine, diving medicine, occupational medicine, travel medicine, tropical medicine and maritime psychology as well as supporting and initiating scientific and research activity to the extent stated above, as an input for contribution of improvement of safety, hygiene at work and health of seafarers and other persons who work at sea worldwide.”

§ 6 of the Statutes of the IMHF describe the way the IMHF will pursue its objectives:

“The IMH Foundation pursues its objectives through:

- a. *inspiring and supporting scientific researches and studies on maritime medicine and adjacent fields, referred to in § 5 above, as well as developing, editing, publishing, promoting and disseminating scientific journal in this regard, under the name International Maritime Health;*
- b. *spreading information and knowledge and facilitating discussions worldwide to the extent compatible with the IMH Foundation’s objectives;*
- c. *attracting people to professions related with maritime medicine and adjacent fields, referred to in § 5 above;*
- d. *participating in organising seminars, events, workshops, conferences and scientific conventions worldwide in order to increase knowledge on maritime medicine and adjacent fields, referred to in § 5 above;*
- e. *cooperating with national and international institutions and organisations with the same or similar interests, including seeking endorsement of this cooperation as the valuable scientific forum worldwide.”*

COOPERATING INSTITUTIONS

The founders want the IMHF to be as open as possible to participation by others. This has been accomplished by including statutory rules regarding ‘Cooperating Institutions’ that should be invited to cooperate on equal terms as the founders, including the right to propose candidates to the Board of Governors. The IMHF will in the near future invite organisations to join. Cooperating Institutions must support the objectives of the IMHF and be approved by the Board of Governors. They must commit themselves to a yearly donation, and will have access to the internal activities of the foundation, as well as influence on how the foundation is developed and managed, through proposals of candidates to the Board of Governors.

The IMHF is not a membership association, and therefore takes no personal membership. Organisations that are legal bodies, whether they are associations or societies, universities, academies or other teaching establishments, companies or enterprises, private or public entities, are welcome to participate as cooperating institutions as long as they meet the requirements of the Statutes of the IMHF.

THE GOVERNING OF THE IMHF

The IMHF is operating under Polish Law on Foundations of 6 April 1984 and other applicable Polish Law. In accordance with this, the foundation shall have a supervisory body. This body has been given more power in the Statutes than those required by law, and will work more or less as a regular governing body, with power to decide on financial

budgets, yearly reporting to the government, strategic plans and appointment of the Management Board. They supplement themselves, and have a term of 5 years with possible renewal. The current Board can be seen in Frame 2. The minimum number of members of the Board of Governors is three, but the Board can supplement themselves with more members among those proposed by cooperating institutions and founders.

Frame 2. The current Board of Governors of the IMHF

- R. Adm. Jan Knudtzon Sommerfelt-Pettersen, Specialist in Public Health (Chair)
- Professor Dr. Marit Grønning, Specialist in Neurology, Head of Department of Occupational Medicine at Haukeland University Hospital
- Dr. Maria Jeżewska, Editor-in-Chief of the IMH

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE IMHF

According to the law, the responsible body towards the authorities is the Management Board. The Board of Governors appoints the Management Board for a term of 5 years with possible renewal. The current board can be seen in Frame 3.

Frame 3. The current Management Board of the IMHF

- Alf Magne Horneland, spec. gen practice and family medicine, Director NCMDM (President)
- Professor Krzysztof Korzeniewski, spec. epidemiology, tropical medicine, travel medicine (Vice President)
- Marta Grubman-Nowak (Secretary and treasurer)

The Management Board is responsible for the day-to-day running of the foundation, as well as representing it externally and towards authorities.

THE RIGHTS TO THE SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL

At the time of establishment, the Polish Society of Maritime, Tropical and Travel Medicine signed a contract with the IMHF, whereby all rights to the IMH is transferred to the foundation. Should the foundation, however, be liquidated in the future, these rights will be transferred back to the PSMTTM.

STATUS OF THE AGREEMENT OF 2009

Formally, this agreement is no longer relevant, as new parties have taken over from the old organisations signing the agreement and the original signatories are not any longer in the position to commit themselves on the matter of the agreement. The establishment of the IMHF changes the premises for this agreement so much, that it cannot any longer be regarded as binding. However, the principles in this agreement have been included in the Statutes of the IMHF, as far as they were regarded as appropriate and suitable. New formal agreements will have to be established for those parties to the agreement that are

not a part of the foundation. That could be done by being included as a cooperating institution or by agreement on separate contracts.

IMHF AND THE FUTURE

The highest priority for the IMHF is to support and sustain the scientific journal IMH. This is so far the only project.

Provided this is successful and that we have sufficient financial power, a natural development would be to engage in other activities described in the Articles 5 and 6 of the IMHF Statutes.

We look forward to cooperation with everyone who wants to increase and disseminate knowledge of maritime medicine and its adjacent fields in different ways.