

# Tackling hypertension – the silent killer

Dr Marcus Brauer, a General Practitioner from one of the Club's PEME approved clinics in South Africa, provides valuable medical insight into one of the industry's most concerning medical issues: hypertension.

Hypertension is currently the second most frequent reason for PEME failure, and the illness alone represents 8% of all unfit decisions. Hypertension is a constant cause of crew illness incidents and can lead to heart disease, stroke, vascular dementia and chronic kidney disease. In 2014, it was estimated that hypertension cost the NHS in the UK over £2 billion in healthcare services and medications.

Hypertension is one of the most common conditions diagnosed during PEME examinations. Other commonly diagnosed conditions worthy of mention are obesity and diabetes. Obesity is often a precursor to both hypertension and diabetes, and therefore, the three conditions are intimately interrelated.

Hypertension is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure and kidney disease. Hypertension is usually asymptomatic, meaning, in most cases, the patient is unaware of the condition. In most cases, hypertension is only discovered through routine blood pressure readings, such as those taken during the UK Club's PEME examinations.

Hypertension is an elevation in blood pressure, which leads to damaged blood vessels in the brain, heart and kidneys. The longer this process goes undetected, the more difficult it becomes to manage the condition with medication.

## Some contributing causes of hypertension

- Smoking
- Inactivity
- Stress
- Obesity
- Alcohol
- Poor diet



## Measures for improvement

**Education of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle** – How we live determines how healthy we are and consequently determines the quality of our later life.

**Stop smoking** – or at the very least, reduce smoking.

**Achieve a healthy BMI** of <25. If above this value, to strive to continuously reduce your BMI.

**Healthy eating habits** – With emphasis on eating fresh fruit, vegetables, salads and healthy protein. The consumption

of starches and sugars should be reduced wherever possible and feasible.

**Regular exercise** – aim for a 30 minute workout at least three days a week.

**Avoid excess salt in food** – This is of particular note when pursuing a healthy lifestyle. Remember that some products like soy sauce have a high salt content.

**Manage any co-existing medical conditions** such as diabetes and elevated cholesterol levels.

**Manage stress** – exercise, meditation, yoga and breathing exercises can all be beneficial.

**Avoid excess alcohol consumption** – recommended consumption levels are less than 5 units of alcohol in a 24 hour time period, and not more than 14 units of alcohol per week.

Ultimately, the responsibility of a seaman's health rests with the individual, but encouraging a healthy, active lifestyle onboard would be a cheap and cost-effective way to assist in preventing health issues such as hypertension.

The Club's PEME programme provides regular, quality pre-employment medical examinations in which seafarers are diagnosed and counselled in matters of health as part of the overall solution to raise health standards on Members' vessels. For more information on the UK Club's PEME programme, contact: [peme.ukclub@thomasmiller.com](mailto:peme.ukclub@thomasmiller.com)

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## PEME (PRE-EMPLOYMENT MEDICAL)

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The Club was the first to launch a PEME scheme in 1996 due to increasing crew illness claims and a lack of accountability of clinics. Since 1996, the PEME programme has become one of the Club's leading loss prevention initiatives. The aim of the programme is to reduce the volume and value of crew illness claims which are caused by a pre-existing illnesses or disease. These underlying conditions often impact on the crew member's fitness for service and can endanger not only the health of the seafarer but also the onboard safety of other crew.

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Sophia joined Thomas Miller in 1992 and from 1994 worked as a claims handler dealing mainly with French and Spanish Members. In 2004, Sophia became the PEME Programme Director. Sophia has undertaken a large number of clinic audits, implemented the standard medical form and clinic guidelines. She has also lead the scheme through the largest period of growth and development with a doubling of approved clinic facilities and a four fold member increase. Sophia is a Director of Thomas Miller & Co. Ltd.

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Saidul Alom joined PEME from the European Region Service Team in 2004. Saidul provides administrative support to the PEME programme and is responsible for liaison with the approved clinics on financial billing matters and ensuring prompt payment of all clinic fees

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Stuart joined Thomas Miller in 1998 as a claims trainee for UK P&I Club's Greek Members. In April 2005 Stuart joined PEME as the Team Administrator. Stuart is responsible for co-ordination of Member entries and administration for the clinic approval process.