

# "DOCTOR AT SEA" a monthly Column in The Islander Magazine

## SCTW95 and all that

SCTW95 starts to run off the tongue after a few weeks in the yachting industry but it is not an easy abbreviation to pin down - so here goes. The Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping for seafarers were originally agreed at a Convention of Member Governments of the International Maritime Organisation in 1995 and were presented as a Code of mandatory requirements affecting the whole range of roles and responsibilities on board ship. The associated certification in these various roles and responsibilities was established to promote safety of life and property at sea and to protect the marine environment and seeks to ensure that seafarers on board ship are qualified and fit for their duties at sea.

Basic training under the Code is the mandatory minimum requirement for all seafarers, other than passengers, employed or engaged in any capacity on board ship on the business of that ship. The Basic Training Certificate has four components which include Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Fighting and Fire Prevention, Personal Skills and Social Responsibility, and Elementary First Aid and successful completion of these SCTW95 courses is now, as of earlier this year, also required for commercial endorsement of RYA certificates of competence.

Courses for Elementary First Aid (EFA) certificate run over one day and cover the basic principles of first aid, first response treatment of a casualty and basic life support and there are no entry requirements other than that candidates must be 16 years or more of age. Following this basic training, there are hierarchies of qualifications in the different skills required by more senior seafarers and this month's article focuses on the qualifications in first aid and in medical care.

The Medical First Aid (MFA) course provides more far-reaching first aid training than the EFA course, particularly for those designated to provide medical first aid on board ship. Candidates must be 16 years or more and must have at least six months sea service to be eligible for the course. Candidates are assessed during the practical exercises and via a multiple choice examination at the end of the course. Successful candidates receive a Proficiency in Medical First Aid certificate which is valid for five years.

The Medical Care on Board Ship (MCOBS) course, previously known as the Ships Captains Medical Course, meets the requirements for seafarers who are designated to take charge of medical care on board ship. The course covers advanced life support, disease management and efficient patient management and the role of radiomedical advice. Candidates must be 21 years or more and have a valid MFA certificate as well as at least eighteen months sea service. As in the MFA course, candidates are assessed during the practical exercises and via a multiple choice examination at the end of the course. Successful candidates receive a Proficiency in Medical Care certificate which is valid for five years.

The Update for Medical Care on Board Ship (UMCOBS) is a refresher course for the Proficiency in Medical Care and is required every five years. Recent communications with the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency indicate that a date-expired Proficiency in Medical Care certificate is an acceptable prerequisite to take the Update course, although clearly an out-of-date certificate is no longer a valid qualification.

The MFA and the MCOBS (and Update) certificates form part of the formal requirements for seafarers seeking more senior positions at sea but hopefully the training is also enjoyable and worthwhile. Sometimes health and safety regulations seem to stifle spontaneity and adventure (there are 231 pages in the SCTW Code of 1995) but a number of individuals do undertake health-related training for their own personal satisfaction or a personal risk assessment before long private voyages sometimes with very limited crew numbers. The yachting industry has been relatively unregulated in the past but the climate is changing rapidly. At the same time, there are increasing opportunities for training on the island to provide seafarers at every level with the knowledge and skills to fulfil the worthwhile aims of SCTW95.

*Dr Ken Prudhoe, MCA Approved Doctor, can be contacted at Club de Mar Medical Centre, Palma de Mallorca. Tel: (+ 34) 639 949 125.*