

The mental health of seafarers – a neglected topic

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Health is more than just the absence of disease; mental health is a prime example. It is essential to prevent and manage stress, anxiety and depression, but it is also vital to promote well-being. This is true in all sectors, but progress on these is often lacking in the maritime industry. The starting point must be education, and it is crucial to have relevant scientific research, policy documents, and readily available information for the seafarer. Auditing mental health is vital, and again, this can take several forms, such as medical examinations, self-reporting, and observation by trained colleagues, as occurs in mental health first-aider schemes. Being at sea creates problems in terms of who is the first-line provider of mental health support. This will depend on the type of vessel, tour of duty, and voyage length and location. In conclusion, the mental health of seafarers is a neglected topic. While there are some excellent onshore models, it is also clear that specific issues in the maritime context require urgent attention.