

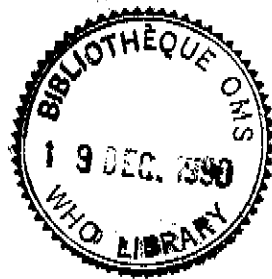
33778

WHO/GPA/INF/89.21
Original: English
Distr.: General

GLOBAL
PROGRAMME
ON **AIDS**

CONSENSUS STATEMENT FROM
THE CONSULTATION ON
AIDS AND SEAFARERS

GENEVA
5-6 OCTOBER 1989



WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
INTERNATIONAL
LABOUR
OFFICE



Consultation on AIDS and Seafarers

Infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) constitute a global problem with many dimensions – social, cultural, economic, political, ethical, and legal.

There are an estimated one million seafarers in the world. Consideration of HIV infection in relation to their workplace is important for dealing effectively with the problems of HIV/AIDS at the local, national and international levels, on board ships and at ports of call.

In order to examine this issue, a consultation was convened in Geneva by the World Health Organization (WHO) in association with the International Labour Office (ILO) from 5 to 6 October 1989. Thirty-nine participants from 18 countries attended the consultation, including representatives of governments, shipowners, seafarer organizations, other nongovernmental organizations, and the public health, medical, legal, and health education professions.

The objectives of the consultation were to examine factors associated with HIV infection among seafarers and to identify special considerations for health promotion about HIV/AIDS among seafarers.

I. Introduction

The consultation endorsed the Statement from the Consultation on AIDS and the Workplace (WHO/GPA/INF/88.7 Rev.1) organized by WHO in association with ILO in Geneva on 27-29 June 1988.

Bearing in mind the international nature of seafaring and the fact that seafarers not only work but also live primarily on board their ships, often for long periods of time, and having examined closely the issue of risks of HIV infection for seafarers, the consultation agreed that seafarers were not at particular risk of HIV infection in their occupational environment. However, the nature of seafaring creates special conditions that justify specific attention being paid to seafarers. Thus, there are factors common to many seafarers worldwide that may put them at risk of exposure to HIV infection. These factors include:

- geographical mobility;
- mixed cultural environment with single crews made up of seafarers from many nations;
- limited social interaction on board ship and ashore;
- limited health facilities;
- the relative youth of the seafaring population;
- access to information about HIV and AIDS limited by time at sea.

Taking account of these special features, the consultation recommended that the aims and objectives for workplace health education on AIDS contained in the report of the Consultation on AIDS and the Workplace (WHO/GPA/DIR/88.4) be endorsed with the inclusion of specific additional considerations applicable to seafarers.

II. Aims and objectives

A. To help prevent HIV infection and its spread, by:

- communicating accurate, up-to-date, authoritative and unambiguous information on HIV infection to all seafarers and their families;
 - promoting accurate and trustworthy personal risk assessment with regard to HIV infection;
 - ensuring that workplace AIDS education programmes are incorporated into other workplace health programmes for seafarers, particularly those concerned with other sexually transmitted diseases and alcohol abuse;
 - developing strategies to help seafarers change their attitudes and behaviour, as necessary.
-

B. To promote the health of HIV-infected seafarers within the workplace, by:

- emphasizing the dangers related to HIV and AIDS while minimizing inappropriate fear and anxiety;
- promoting a sensitive and responsible attitude towards HIV-infected seafarers;
- keeping HIV-infected seafarers and seafarers with AIDS informed about their rights and responsibilities, as well as providing them with support.

AIDS health promotion strategies having these aims and objectives, should take account of the following:

- the particular structural and health care considerations of seafarers;
- appropriate communication strategies;
- intersectoral and international collaboration, including collaboration between centres for health promotion for seafarers and between port health authorities.

Strategies should be developed through consultation between shipowners and seafarers, their respective organizations and, where appropriate, governmental agencies and other organizations.

III. Recommendations

In order to advance the issues addressed during the consultation, the following recommendations are made.

A. WHO and ILO should:

- ensure wide distribution of the report of the consultation and the statement;
- provide guidance on AIDS health promotion targeted at seafarers;
- support relevant regional pilot projects on AIDS health promotion for seafarers;
- collect information worldwide through a resource centre and set up a network for dissemination of resource packages with culturally sensitive material, including video tapes and posters;
- encourage and support the inclusion of AIDS health promotion in the training of seafarers at all stages of their career;
- re-examine existing occupational health and safety regulations and medical guides for ships, and the ways in which they are currently used and applied;
- help to ensure that national AIDS committees establish links with those working on HIV/AIDS issues for seafarers.

B. In addition, WHO should consider:

- collaborating with ILO to encourage the integration of AIDS health promotion into overall health promotion for seafarers, including education about sexually transmitted diseases and alcohol abuse;
- collaborating with ILO in the development of a seafarers' manual for the use of physicians that would take into account the cultural sensitivities of this occupational group;
- increasing the involvement of its collaborating centres for the health of seafarers in the development of relevant training;
- collaborating with ILO in producing and disseminating educational video tapes on HIV/AIDS, possibly including a video presenting epidemiological information on AIDS, for adaptation at regional or national levels, or promotional inserts for commercial video tapes.

-
- C. Finally, the consultation also recommends that the Consensus Statement and recommendations be conveyed to the International Maritime Organization for information and action, as appropriate.**

This document is not a formal publication of the World Health Organization (WHO), and all rights are reserved by the Organization. The document may, however, be freely reviewed, abstracted, reproduced or translated, in part or in whole, but not for sale or for use in conjunction with commercial purposes.

The views expressed in documents by named authors are solely the responsibility of those authors.