



Press release from ITF Seafarers' Trust and Centro Internazionale Radio Medico (CIRM)

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First 'intelligent system' for medical assistance at sea to be developed by Centro Internazionale Radio Medico (CIRM), with funding from ITF Seafarers' Trust

Centro Internazionale Radio Medico (CIRM) has secured funding from the ITF Seafarers Trust to launch an ambitious new project to develop an 'intelligent system' to help seafarers in need of remote medical assistance on board ships.

CIRM has provided a telemedical maritime assistance service (TMAS) to seafarers since the invention of radio, and which is nowadays provided mainly via emails. One limitation of maritime telemedical consultation is the fact that the great majority of people asking for medical advice to a TMAS do not have proper medical training. As a result, the communication of symptoms or specific clinical situations can be difficult or misleading and can result in poor medical assistance.

"The new 'intelligent system' will guide users through a series of choices improving the communication of symptoms from ships to doctors. Information provided by users will be processed by the 'intelligent system' so that doctors ashore can provide a prompt and precise diagnosis and therefore a better response to seafarers' medical needs" said Prof. Francesco Amenta, CIRM President.

The 2-year project will start by examining records from the last 20 years of CIRM activities, including more than 5,000 medical cases involving seafarers, turning all the data accumulated into a readable format to inform the new system. This will provide the 'intelligence' of the new system and the core of its 'Artificial Neural Network (ANN)'. The final product of the project will be a piece of software which will be available to be installed on ships' computers worldwide and accessible offline. All medical requests, filtered through the software, will still be sent to CIRM doctors, who are available 24/7 to all seafarers in need of medical help. CIRM has been running this service since 1935. This will allow the remote doctor to take best possible care of the patient and provide relevant advice to the ship's captain in the event of medical emergencies following the step by step process of the new system.

“The ITF Seafarers’ Trust is excited to support this important project which uses CIRM’s rich archives to inform an innovative new approach harnessing the possibilities of artificial intelligence. We are convinced that this work will result in concrete improvements to health outcomes for seafarers experiencing medical emergencies at sea which is a priority for the ITF Seafarers’ Trust. A remote intelligent system can dramatically improve the chance to save seafarers lives and improve the quality of the remote medical service currently provided” said Katie Higginbottom, Head of the ITF Seafarers’ Trust.

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Note to editors:

Founded in 1935, Centro Internazionale Radio Medico (CIRM), is the Italian Telemedical Maritime Assistance Service (TMAS) providing radio medical assistance to seafarers on board vessels at sea, without a doctor on board, free of charge.

ITF Seafarers Trust is a UK registered charity that funds programmes to advance the health and wellbeing of maritime workers. It is funded through the welfare fund of the International Transport Workers’ Federation, a global union federation of trade unions representing the interests of 19.7 million workers.

For further information contact:

Luca Tommasi, Grants Manager, ITF Seafarers’ Trust at luca@seafarerstrust.org

Postal Address: ITF House, 49 – 60 Borough Road, London SE1 1DR, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7403 2733 Website: www.seafarerstrust.org Email: info@seafarerstrust.org