



Maritime Medicine Conference

Lieutenant Commander Thanawat Supanitayanon*

Maritime medicine is one of the newly established medical specialisations in the world. It is the integration of medical knowledge in the service of health conditions related to maritime industries and related factors. As part of Maritime Labour Act of the Kingdom of Thailand enforced on October 8th, 2015, maritime medicine shall provide services related to the fields including medical examination of seafarers and divers, health surveillance, maritime occupational service, emergency medical services at sea, etc. Even though, it is one of the national's utmost aspect in national security as it provides support for national maritime interests, Thailand still has inadequate specialists in maritime medicine and lack of resources in training and education in such field.

Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine (NCMM) is the national competence centre for maritime medicine in Norway, established by decision of the Norwegian Parliament in 2004, with regular activity from June 2006. NCMM is a section of the Department of Occupational Medicine at Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen with affiliation to the University of Bergen. NCMM along with Haukeland University Hospital has many internationally-recognised specialists related to maritime medicine specialisations; i.e, maritime medicine, occupational medicine, diving and hyperbaric medicine, etc.

Naval Medical Department was first established on April, 1890. The department has since been developing, all through its 125 years to be a well-known military medical institute in Thailand. It offers medical services in various fields by the naval hospitals under its commands. The department has offered services in underwater and hyperbaric medicine since May 29, 1973. Currently, the department offers service with Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT), Maritime and Aquatic Life Support (MALS), training for doctors, nurses, medics, and other health professionals related to underwater and hyperbaric medicine.

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From the initiations of Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Kanin Chumworatayee RTN, and Ambassador, Royal Embassy at Oslo, H.E.Mr.Jukr Boon-Long; Royal Thai Naval Medical Department (NMD) and Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine (NCMM) have recently arranged a conference on “To the future of Thai Maritime Medicine” at Montien Riverside Hotel and Naval Medical Department Club during November 11-12, 2015.

There were 3 main delegates from NCMM; Dr. Alf Magne Horneland, Dr. Tim Carter, and Professor Marit Grønning who shared their experience in the setting of maritime medicine service, building the institute and networks from Norwegian aspects. Dr.Alf Magne Horneland is currently the Director of Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine at Haukeland University Hospital, Head Appellate Body of Norwegian Maritime Authority, ex-president of IMHA (International Maritime Health Association) and manager of IMHA QUALITY. Dr. Tim Carter is a maritime medicine professor at NCMM, special adviser to ILO (International Labour Organisation) and IMO (International Maritime Organisation) and also chief medical adviser to the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Professor Marit Grønning is the Head of the Department of Occupational Medicine at Haukeland University Hospital specialising in neurology, underwater and hyperbaric medicine.

Moreover, there were also speakers from Naval Medical Department, Commander Sethasiri Sangsuwan on the topic of “Maritime residency training program in Naval Medical Department” and Lieutenant Commander Thanawat Supanitayanon on the topic of “Maritime medicine specialists” and “Medical fitness examination” with support from high quality organisation from the NMD staff and all the preparation and work done behind the stage.

The 2-day conference was considerably successful and there were more than 100 participants from many organisations related to maritime medicine sectors, i.e., Royal Thai Navy CEOs, naval medical personnel, Marine Department, Ministry of Public Health, offshore industries, Thai Seafarer Association, Thai Shipowners’ Association, diving and hyperbaric medicine units, diving industries, fishing industries and many other organisations. The conference consisted of many interesting sessions about collaboration, network, new establishment of the Maritime Medicine Institute in the country, future-to-be services in maritime medicine, and 3-year residency training program in Maritime Medicine organised by Preventive Medicine Association of Thailand and the Medical Council of Thailand in which 5 medical doctors have recently been enrolled for studying in the specialisation program.



The success of the conference was emphasised by the arrangement of the next day meeting between Royal Thai Navy CEO, Naval Medical Department CEOs, maritime physicians with delegates from Norway. The meeting on November 13th was focused on the future collaboration on the international inter-institute levels. The meeting participants agreed on drafting MOU between Royal Thai Naval Medical Department and Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine in academic co-operations and training both Underwater and Maritime Medicine, in which, Naval Medical Department will mainly take part in supporting the training in Underwater and Hyperbaric Medicine while Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine will be in charge of supporting the training in Maritime Medicine. In addition, the Naval Medical Department is applying for a cooperate membership of IMHA in accordance with the agreement and the determination in strengthening their 2016 - 2019 vision "To become the nation's high performing military medical organisation which plays a leading role in Maritime Medicine".

While the MOU is being reviewed by the responsible personnel from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Embassy at Oslo, Norway, Norwegian Centre for Maritime Medicine and Naval Medical Department on legal aspects, the improvement in maritime medicine is already on its way. At the moment, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Public Health is working closely with maritime physicians from Naval Medical Department as representatives in the forthcoming first established maritime medicine institute in Thailand. Department of Medical Services is focusing on promulgation the Ministry's Announcements on Maritime Labour Act of Kingdom of Thailand enforced on October 8, 2015, on issues of 1) Medical Certificate for seafarers 2) Certificate of Competencies for seafarers related to health issues - Medical First Aid Course and Medical Care on Board Course 3) Approval of medical examiners for seafarers. With the legal obligations and supports, all stakeholders



Underwater Medicine



Occupational Medicine

are working hard and aiming high towards the best standards for seafarers along with the ship owners, health and productivity to the highest level that the medical professions could provide. This shall be concluded within 6 months after the Act was launched in October 2015.

Although maritime medicine has only been introduced to Naval Medical Department and Thailand for less than 10 years, the similar branch of medicine was developed in the country as well as in the region for more than 40 years starting with the navy's specialisation in "underwater medicine". Maritime Medicine is considered as one of the most fast-paced specialisations since it targets to the people with specific health risks and environmental hazards to the people whose jobs are related to the sea, ocean, shore-based, offshore, diving, and sea-piloting. This field of medicine is the integration of many branches of medicine to form one specialisation unit providing effective services to all health aspects of working at sea i.e. health risk assessment, fit for work, emergency medical service, Telemedical Assistance Service (TMAS), medical examination for seafarers, and divers, etc.



Aviation Medicine



Maritime and Aquatic Life Support



Since Thailand has faced the problems of unregulated fishing, illegal migrant workers, environmental issues, social responsible and welfares, etc. For decades, the future-to-be setup of Maritime Medicine Institute in Thailand would bring about an extent of holistic services for a better health of people engaging in maritime professions. The initial successful conference being participated by a number of people involving in maritime medicine and related field could help set up at network of medical services for the good sake of people at sea in Thailand. Furthermore, future conference, meeting, consensus, agreement, and training would greatly strengthen the upcoming Maritime Medicine Institute in Thailand and the final result the best health of people at sea both in the navy and civilians.