

MARITIME SCHOOLS' CONFERENCES

**Wellness at Sea: Positive wellbeing
for a rewarding seafaring career**



Wellness at Sea
FROM SAILORS' SOCIETY



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OVERVIEW

With the global pandemic placing extra pressures on the world's seafarers and rates of anxiety and mental health issues increasing, the need for wellness and wellbeing support has never been greater.

Since 2015, Sailors' Society has been providing comprehensive wellness support and training for seafarers and their companies under its pioneering Wellness at Sea programme. With the stresses of life at sea growing, it recognised the importance of offering wellness education and assistance from the earliest point in a seafarer's career - cadetship.

Drawing on core elements and knowledge from the Wellness at Sea programme, Sailors' Society designed and ran a health and wellbeing conference specially for cadets.

In September 2021, in partnership with Maritime Colleges in India, it held Wellness at Sea: Positive wellbeing for a reward seafaring career. The day-long webinar featured talks from industry leaders, including interactive sessions and practical advice, equipping and empowering participants with awareness and skills to serve them throughout their seafaring lives. More than 1,300 participants were provided with the tools and knowledge to help manage their wellbeing as they embark on their careers at sea. It also signposted them to resources and places to access support if needed at any point in their careers. The event was sponsored by Fleet Management Ltd and Seaspan Corporation, and hosted online by The UK P&I Club.

Given the overwhelming success of the webinar, Sailors' Society will be replicating this model in 2022, sharing the knowledge of Wellness at Sea with cadets around the globe and preparing them to enjoy long and fulfilling careers at sea.

"Life at sea can be challenging, especially with the added pressures of the pandemic, so it's more important now than ever to look after our seafarers. By starting wellness training in college, we hope to deepen understanding of mental health and wellbeing, as well as knowledge of where to seek help when needed, giving the best opportunity as these cadets embark on their careers at sea."

Johan Smith
Sailors' Society's Head of Wellness



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BACKGROUND

Sailors' Society has been supporting seafarers, their families and communities in need for more than 200 years. As one of the largest and most comprehensive seafarers' support charities in the world, we provide a practical lifeline to the 1.6 million merchant seafarers globally, supporting with everything from port welfare, wellness training and education to crisis response.

The global pandemic, and the resulting crew change crisis, have made the challenges seafarers were already facing far, far worse: loneliness, depression, money worries, stress, exhaustion, relationship breakdown – the list goes on.

Our pioneering Wellness at Sea programme gives seafarers the tools to manage these issues before they turn into a crisis, supporting their wellbeing across every area of their lives and careers, giving them the best opportunity to enjoy a fulfilling - and productive - career at sea. The programme consists of a variety of tools, including a training programme, elearning, bespoke support for companies and a free awareness campaign.

Following engagement with a number of maritime schools in India as part of our Wellness at Sea Awareness Campaign, it became evident that there was a need and appetite for a wellness and mental health conference aimed specifically at cadets. We recognised the importance of including wellbeing in the education and training of cadets - tomorrow's workforce and future leaders in the industry.



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THE PILOT EVENT: MARITIME SCHOOLS' CONFERENCE, INDIA

On 30 September 2021, Sailors' Society hosted Wellness at Sea: Positive wellbeing for a rewarding seafaring career, a wellness and mental health conference designed exclusively for maritime school students.

The first of its kind, the seminar was designed specifically to focus on sharing the importance of positive wellbeing and mental health for seafarers, while helping to prepare them for a career at sea.

The day-long virtual seminar comprised of talks by various industry experts who touched on different elements of being a seafarer.

The event was chaired by Johan Smith, Sailors' Society's head of wellness, who is well-known across the industry for his expert knowledge and for being a pioneer in seafarer wellbeing and wellness.

Speakers were drawn from the region and included:

- Dr Malini Shankar, VC of Indian Maritime University and Previous Director General of Shipping
- Dr Santosh Loganathan, Psychiatrist at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences
- Umesh Pherwani, Neuro-Linguistic Practitioner and author of 'The Mindswitch'
- Capt. Anuj Velankar, Regional Loss Prevention Director, Thomas Miller
- Capt. Prashant Ragnekar, Chief Operating Officer, Fleet Management India
- Capt. Dinesh Jairam, Global Talent Acquisition Manager, Seaspan Ship Management

Significantly, the event also included a panel of students from the different maritime schools giving their perspective on both the challenges and solutions.

The day was designed to be interactive and engaging, with polls throughout. It was run free of charge, and all participating students received a certificate at the end of the event.

KEY FIGURES:

1,845

delegates registered for the webinar

1,329

attended on the day

19

Indian maritime schools participated

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Participants showed a significant amount of interest in the topics presented by the various speakers, which is a testament to the level of credibility of Sailors' Society as a reliable source for information and guidance in the seafarer community. More than 160 questions were posted by participants, both before and during the webinar.

Questions included:

- What can you do to avoid fatigue onboard?
- How can we make wellbeing support more accessible to seafarers?
- What are the various ways to tackle bullying onboard, how to be ourselves and make others mentally strong and positive about the profession when new in the industry?
- Are job opportunities in the shipping industry declining?
- How do we recruit and retain female seafarers?

The event provided some significant insights from participants, including on the biggest challenge seafarers face when going to sea, with **depression, loneliness, mental health** and **staying away from family** among the top listed challenges.

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EVALUATION

Evaluation was undertaken throughout the day and after the event, via polls and surveys, with contributions from both students and the maritime schools.

Data gathered from participants showed that they felt the conference had significantly improved their understanding of wellbeing, increased their confidence about speaking to someone on the issue of wellbeing, and that they felt better prepared for a career at sea as a result.

I feel that I have a better understanding of wellbeing following this conference:

More than 95% of respondents Strongly Agree/Agree



I feel more confident about speaking to someone about wellbeing following this conference:

More than 95% of respondents Strongly Agree/Agree



This seminar has better prepared me for a future career at sea:

100% of respondents Strongly Agree/Agree



Having attended the conference. I now know where I can go for wellbeing support if I need it.

More than 95% of respondents Strongly Agree/Agree



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INSIGHTS FROM THE CONFERENCE

The conference produced some other interesting insights including that, for this group of cadets, treatment of crews was by far considered the most important factor when choosing a shipping company to work for, with salary and access to WiFi getting far fewer votes. When asked why they wished to become a seafarer, the majority of participants named taking care of their family as the primary motivation, followed by income and a desire to travel the world.

To enrich the information gathered, Sailors' Society is considering revisiting these questions with event participants once they've embarked on careers at sea to see if there is any change in response.

The reason I want to become a seafarer is:

21%

TO TRAVEL THE
WORLD

29%

TO MAKE LOTS
OF MONEY

48%

TO TAKE CARE
OF MY FAMILY

2%

I'M NOT SURE
HOW I ENDED
UP HERE

The most important factor when choosing a shipping company:

17%

THE AMOUNT OF
MONEY I GET PAID

3%

WHETHER THEY HAVE
WIFI ON BOARD

80%

HOW THEY TREAT
SEAFARERS

What is your biggest fear as a maritime student?

58%

NOT GETTING A
JOB WHEN I'M
DONE STUDYING

16%

DISAPPOINTING
MY FAMILY

14%

NOT BEING ABLE
TO COPE WITH
LIFE AT SEA

12%

NOT PASSING
MY EXAM

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94%

strongly agreed that wellness and mental health are a key part of being a seafarer

64%

agreed that enough is done by their maritime school to prepare them for the wellbeing challenges of life at sea.

Poor mental health is the result of:

8%

BAD PARENTING

13%

THE CULTURE YOU WERE
RAISED IN

79%

A COMPLEX NUMBER OF
BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

I am confident to have a discussion with a friend or a crew mate who may be displaying signs and symptoms of poor mental health

27%

STRONGLY
AGREE

41%

AGREE

29%

50/50

2%

DISAGREE

1%

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

I know enough about mental health to recognise early warning signs and symptoms of poor mental health.

51%

STRONGLY
AGREE

36%

AGREE

11%

50/50

3%

DISAGREE

0%

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

FEEDBACK

Other feedback from the cadets and tutors included:

"The webinar experience was impeccably conducted with excellent, flawless presentation. I compliment the technical support and the team for one the best webinar experiences in this period of the new norm of webinars everywhere."

Mr Tanuj Kumar, IMS Goa Staff

"It's a golden opportunity to gain knowledge attending this conference. I am very thankful for the authorities for giving us such a golden opportunity."

Bhardwaj Manan, Anglo-Eastern Maritime Academy

"This was my first ever event in the maritime domain, I found it really insightful and helpful. The crisis response information and how to handle stress and workload, everything was superb and wonderful. All of the speakers were equally brilliant and shared great experience and knowledge."

Participant (feedback from the survey)

"Thank you for the webinar today. It was a pleasure to attend this wonderful webinar. I have learned so many new things today which I am sure are going to help me in future."

Participant (feedback from the survey)

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KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The event was a huge success based on evaluation from the students, the maritime schools and key speakers.

Key lessons learnt:

- Interactive sessions worked very well and should be built on in future.
- The conference was organised at very short notice to fit in around exams. As a result some participants had to drop in and out because of other commitments – a longer lead-in time is needed for future events.

GOING FORWARD

The Wellness at Sea: Positive wellbeing for a rewarding seafaring career presents a blueprint that can be used elsewhere around the globe. In our poll with participants, 100% agreed that wellbeing should be a mandatory element of maritime training.

Following its success, we are replicating the conference format in India, Philippines, South Africa and Greece as part of our strategy for 2022. The conferences will follow the template of our pilot event but with speakers relevant to the country.

Aimed at proactive investment in young minds, these unique conferences will be specifically designed to empower cadets through building awareness and skills around wellness that will serve them throughout their careers.

Working with maritime schools, we have the potential to reach thousands of cadets to help them better prepare for a long and fulfilling career at sea; they in turn will also be better able to provide support to their crewmates and families.

The events give us the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of pre-sea maritime school students by empowering them to take charge of their own wellbeing. They also allow us to introduce Sailors' Society as a trusted partner to prospective seafarers at a young age and signpost them to our services for support during their career.

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