



# LP Bulletin

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## Bulletin 613 - 12/08 - Testing for HIV and Hepatitis in PEME - Ukraine

Following several recent cases of crew illness, exposing members to large medical and repatriation costs, the Club's local correspondent in Odessa, Ukraine has alerted the Association to the importance of screening for HIV infection at pre-employment medical examinations.



The average cost in medical expenses and repatriation in these recent cases is US\$700,000. In all of these cases there was long-term pre-existing HIV infection which either developed into AIDS during the employment or seriously complicated treatment of injuries received on board. In some cases it was combined with Hepatitis C. On review of the sick crews' PEME certificates it was found that they had not been tested for HIV or hepatitis prior to the voyage.

The PEME clinics explained that under Ukrainian law the HIV test is an exclusively voluntary and confidential matter, and therefore cannot be included in a standard PEME without instructions from the Employer and consent of the seaman. According to crewing agents, ship owners do not usually request testing for include HIV or hepatitis in PEME examinations.

HIV and various types of hepatitis are now very widespread in Ukraine. According to the World Health Organization, 400,000 people in Ukraine (nearly 1% of the population) are HIV infected. These illnesses show no obvious symptoms at the initial stages and it is therefore important that specific tests for diagnosing them are included in PEME examinations.

The UK P&I Club PEME's clinic in Odessa, Odessa National Maritime Academy "Academmarine", was approved by the Club in December 2005. In the last three years the PEME Programme has successfully screened over 300 Ukrainian crew destined for member vessels.

Members who participate in the UK P&I Club PEME Programme are offered HIV and Hepatitis screening as part of the standard PEME examination in the Ukraine. Crewmembers sign their consent for these tests in accordance with local regulations.

The PEME team, through our direct link with approved clinics, collate and analyse statistics illustrating the top ten reasons for unfitness. Hepatitis B is the top cause of unfitness amongst crew screened by the PEME Programme, and 13.5% of all unfit seafarers tested worldwide were found to have the disease (view [case studies on crew unfitness](#)).

For more information about the PEME Programme please email the PEME Programme Director, Sophia Grant at [Peme.UKClub@Thomasmiller.com](mailto:Peme.UKClub@Thomasmiller.com).

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