



# **Is There a Consensus About the Fitness-to-Dive Criteria?**

## **The UK Perspective**

Dr. Chris. Edge

Dr. Stephen Glen

UK Sport Diving Medical Committee

# Old Medical Certification

- Until 2000:
  - Members of BS-AC, SAA and SSAC had to have fitness-to-dive assessed by a questionnaire and a medical examination by any doctor;
  - Assessed every 5 years to age < 40, every 3 years from age  $\geq 41$  to age < 50, and annually thereafter
  - Contrasted with PADI where RSTC self-assessment medical form had only to be filled out once at the start of diving career
  - A physician examined the diver only if he/she answered “Yes” to any question

# New Medical Certification

- In 2000, fitness-to-dive assessment for BS-AC, SAA, and SSAC members replaced by a self-assessment questionnaire
- Divers only medically examined if they answer “Yes” to any of the questions
- Medical examination carried out by doctors trained in diving medicine (medical referees)
- Questionnaire is completed on an annual basis whatever the age of the diver

# Assessment of Impact of Self-Certification

- Carried out on all members and all potential members of SSAC
- SSAC can monitor system closely as all medical records are retained centrally
- Assessment made of:
  - Impact of new medical system on medical referee workload;
  - Diver exclusion rates;
  - Diving incident frequency

# Results

- Classification of referrals:

---

Asthma	98/413 (23.7%)
Medication queries	43/413 (10.4%)
Hypertension	39/413 (9.4%)
Previous DCI	35/413 (8.5%)
Depression or anxiety	18/413 (4.4%)
Migraine	11/413 (2.7%)

---

# Results

- Since introduction of new medical certification in SSAC, there have been 15 reported incidents
- Two incidents have occurred in divers with a medical history:
  - One incident of possible neurological DCI in a diver with a history of hypertension. He had also been stung by a jellyfish. Unclear if symptoms related to this. No benefit from recompression.
  - One incident of neurological DCI in a diver who was obese and hypertensive. He had performed 18 dives in 9 days.

# Summary

- Self-administered questionnaire appears effective after 3 years of follow-up
- There has been an ***increase*** in failure rates for divers
- Divers have the benefit of direct assessment by doctors with diving medicine experience