



University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System ~UNOLS~

Ad Hoc Committee on Medical Questions/Medical History Forms/ Pregnancy at Sea





Introduction

In May-July 2015 the UNOLS office has received e-mails and comments from the community that the policies regarding pregnant women as members of cruise science parties could be more clearly stated and readily accessible. The UNOLS Council also considered a relevant article published in Oceanography magazine.

(http://www.tos.org/oceanography/archive/27-4_supp_orcutt.pdf.)

Questions raised on the accommodations that UNOLS vessels provided for nursing mothers.

Questions on the types of protected personal information on medical history forms have also been asked.



UNOLS strives to provide clear policy information on all these issues with an aim toward promoting a safe and friendly work environment on all ships in the fleet.

UNOLS has taken the approach that these various policies are best determined at the institutional level however UNOLS can make suggestions to improve and better communicate this process.

Council Recommendation: The establishment of an ad hoc committee from the UNOLS Council members has been created to evaluate these issues and provide recommendations that will help to resolve them.



Terms of Reference- July 2015

Charge:

- Research current policies and practices aboard UNOLS ships regarding protected personal information, medical history forms, participation at sea for pregnant and provisions for nursing women, and other issues as identified.
- Work to make existing policies more transparent for all.
- Report back to the Council with written recommendations on various methods that would help to clarify and articulate these policies.



Ad Hoc Committee Members

Clare Reimers/OSU

Debbie Steinberg/VIMS

Bruce Appelgate/SIO

Scott Ferguson/UH

Jon Alberts/UNOLS



Issues to consider

Pregnancy Policy for participating on UNOLS research vessel expeditions, including storage of breast milk and accommodations for nursing mothers.

Sexual Harassment, Prevention, Occurrences.- Follow on to previous work by Gender at Sea committee to review procedures for reporting and addressing both shipboard and shore-side incidents at the end of the cruise.

Medical History Forms and protected personal information. - How this information is used, stored, and archived at the end of a cruise.



Anecdotal Information

- “Submittal of inaccurate information on medical history forms”
- “Some operators allow medical history form to be optional”
- “People lie on the forms because there is no clear statement on how the information is being used, stored and destroyed after.”
- “Trying to implement a common UNOLS wide policy would be difficult”
- “UNOLS needs to address issues which could create barriers for women in oceanography”
- “This is a problem of inconsistent application and poor communication”
- “Some women hide their pregnancy to go on cruises.”



Path Forward

- Continue to collect existing policy information
- Identify gaps in policies and how these policies are communicated.
- Work to inform UNOLS Community what the policies are
- Solicit information from community on how to improve upon these practices.
- Other Ideas- Open to suggestions.
- Continue to report out on progress made.