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(ISO 9001 CERTIFIED)
AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT DIVISION
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HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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GENERAL ADVICE FOR MEDICAL CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

1. Introduction

1.1 This AIC serves to provide general advice to medical certificate holders (i.e. pilots and Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs)) on minor illnesses, medication (prescribed or over-the-counter (OTC)), supplements (herbal remedies and minerals etc.), alcohol use and vaccinations.

2. Minor Illnesses of Pilots and ATCOs

2.1 Accidents and incidents have occurred as a result of pilots flying whilst medically unfit and the majority have been associated with minor illnesses rather than overwhelming medical conditions. Although the symptoms of minor illnesses such as colds, sore throat, diarrhoea and other abdominal ailments may cause relatively little problem in the normal course of events, they may become dangerous in the flying environment and air traffic work by distracting the pilots or ATCOs. Symptoms may also increase in severity in the altered environmental conditions of flight and some illnesses can produce subtle effects that are not obvious to the sufferer.

2.2 Medical certificate holders are reminded to be mindful of minor illnesses before and when performing operational duties and observe the procedures for notification of unfitness promulgated in the relevant AICs.

3. Medications and Supplements

3.1 In addition, medical certificate holders are reminded of the potential effects of medication. Medication includes not only that prescribed by physician, but also OTC medication, herbal remedies and mineral and other supplements. Attention should also be given to herbal remedies and supplements and their potential side effects that may bring significant consequences especially in the flying environment. For the potential effects of common medications and supplements, please refer to the relevant health promotion article on Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department (HKCAD) website.

3.2 Medical certificate holders using a new medication or supplement for the first time should always use it when they are not flying or performing air traffic control duties, in order to find out if they experience any unexpected side effects. Seeking advice from an AME is always recommended before using any new medication or supplement.

4. Alcohol Use

4.1 Alcohol beverages, even if consumed outside duty periods, can adversely affect the performance of medical certificate holders during operational duties, such as poor concentration, carelessness, risk-taking behaviour and errors in judgement etc. Medical certificate holders are reminded not to operate as pilot or ATCO with any level of alcohol in their body or whilst suffering from the after effects of alcohol intake, even if the blood alcohol level is below detectable level.

4.2 While there are no widely-agreed methodologies to ascertain or calculate when the blood alcohol level would fall to zero after a given amount of alcohol has been consumed, it is established that the larger the amount of alcohol taken, the longer it takes to be cleared. HKCAD requires a minimum of 8 hours buffer from last alcohol intake before the start of operational duty in general terms, but the buffer may need to be lengthened depending on the amount of alcohol consumed.

4.3 Medical certificate holders are reminded of their obligation under the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 that he/she shall not be entitled to act as a member of the flight crew of an aircraft registered in Hong Kong and exercise the privileges of his/her licence if he/she knows or reasonably suspects that his/her physical or mental condition renders him/her temporarily or permanently unfit to perform such functions or to act in such capacity.

5. Vaccinations

5.1 Medical certificate holders are reminded not to undertake aviation safety-sensitive duties or activities within a period of 24 hours after receiving each dose of general vaccinations, such as those for hepatitis, varicella, and influenza etc.

5.2 For non-generic vaccines or vaccinations under authorisation for emergency use (e.g. vaccines for new emerging communicable diseases), the observation period should be at least 48 hours following the administration of each dose of vaccines, or any longer period as separately promulgated by the HKCAD.

6. Reference

6.1 Medical certificate holders can refer to the HKCAD website for more guidance materials on aeromedical matters at: <https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/aeromedical.html>.

6.2 For further enquiries, please contact the HKCAD Personnel Licensing Office at plo@cad.gov.hk.

7. AIC 09/21 and AIC 31/21 are hereby superseded.

The Circular is issued for information, guidance and necessary action
by direction of the Director-General of Civil Aviation
Victor LIU