



PREVENTION AT SEA

CIRCULAR 06/2018

MEDICINES &  
MEDICAL SUPPLIES  
- SEAFARER WELFARE ONBOARD



Don't Cure,  
**PREVENT**

## Medicines & Medical supplies - Seafarer Welfare Onboard



**Case Study:** Recently, it was reported that a cargo vessel faced difficulties in Rotterdam, when Port State Control Officers boarded the vessel for a detailed inspection. During inspection, the PSC Officers requested to examine the content of the medicine chest using the IMGS (International Medical Guide for Ships) List. Most of the medicines listed were missing and the available medicines found within the medicine chest were about to expire, while some of them had already expired. As a result the following deficiency was imposed;

“Medicines are missing, while some of the existing are expired!”



Several cases have been reported over the years, where seafarers' injuries, illnesses or deaths could have been minimized or prevented, if medicine chest supplies were properly maintained and crew were adequately trained on their use.

**Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006)** states that medicine chests should be properly maintained and inspected by the Flag Administration or port state at regular time intervals, not exceeding 12 months. Through the subject inspection, it should be ensured that the labelling, expiry dates, lot/batch number of each item and conditions of storage of all medicines along with relevant directions for their use, are checked.

Prevention at Sea recommends to contact the Flag Administration of the vessel for specific requirements on the type and quantities of medicines & medical supplies required to be available on board, recordkeeping, inspection, certification of the medicine chest and disposal practices!



Example of Ship's Medicine Chest

The Master of the vessel along with the Medical Officer need to be aware of the medicines and medical supplies available onboard. Additionally, periodical inspections must be carried out on the medical supplies/equipment to ensure that they are properly kept in good condition and are ready for immediate use whenever this is required.

The quantities needed on board should be in accordance with:

- the duration and destination of the voyage;
- the number of crew members, and
- the nature of the cargo.

Approved pharmaceutical suppliers should inspect the vessel's chest on behalf of the Ship Manager/ Owner and issue a Certificate confirming the date of inspection, medicine expiry dates and compliance with regulations. This Certificate should be readily available for further review approval by the relevant authority.

**Particular attention should be paid when the vessel is travelling to a malaria endemic area, since additional medicines and supplies (e.g. malaria prevention medication and mosquito repellents) are also required.**

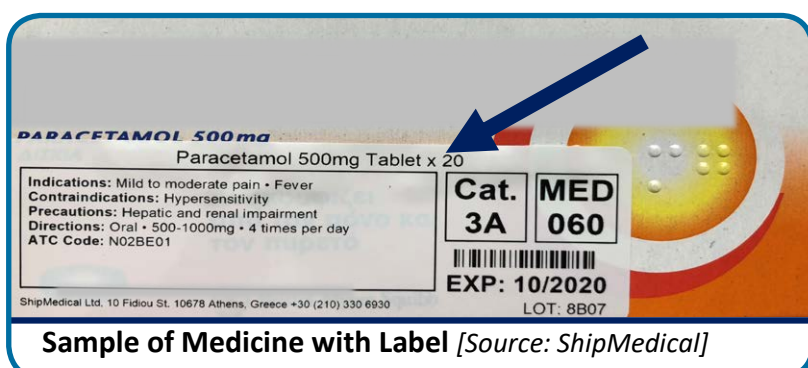
## Good Practice

A good practice is to keep an inventory of medicines in electronic format and divide them into clearly **labelled 'per case' categories**. With this practice, it would be easy for the vessel and the Ship Manager to control the medicines available onboard and replenish missing quantities.

*An indicative list of these categories can be found below;*

<b>Category 1:</b>	Cardiovascular medicines
<b>Category 2:</b>	Medicines used for gastric and duodenal disorders
<b>Category 3:</b>	Analgesics and antispasmodics
<b>Category 4:</b>	Medicines used for central nervous system disorders
<b>Category 5:</b>	Anti-allergics and anti-anaphylactics
<b>Category 6:</b>	Medicines used for respiratory system conditions
<b>Category 7:</b>	Anti-infections medicines
<b>Category 8:</b>	Compounds promoting rehydration, caloric intake and plasma expansion
<b>Category 9:</b>	Medicines for external use [etc...]

The medicines can be labeled with the specific name of their category and in the working language of the ship i.e. English, in order to be easily tracked and retrieved in case of an emergency. In addition to the name of the category, it is suggested to insert on the outside cover of each medicine, a clear indication of the dose required for the treatment of the specific medical issue that the medicine is intended for, always in consultation with a specialized marine pharmacist (See sample photo).





**Remember!**  
A good medicine management onboard  
can save a life!



# PREVENTION AT SEA

DON'T CURE, PREVENT! FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US.



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