

5AMMA JOURNAL VOL 6 ISSUE 2

JULY 1997

The Aerospace Medicine Association Conference. 11-15 May 1997, Chicago

by

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A possibly newly reported aviation-related syndrome was described by Rich Williams, an Aerospace Medicine resident. It has long been known among civilian aerobatic performers that exposure to large amounts of -Gz can give rise to a phenomenon called 'the wobbles'. which is a form of vertigo and can be debilitating for periods of up to 2 months. It may be simply a benign position vertigo in another guise. We await further research.

The US military is embracing operational risk management (ORM) big time as the way to further reduce aircraft mishaps. The concept is excellent: prior to any flight, an assessment must be made of a multitude of factors involved in the flight - operator, aircraft, enemy, weather, etc. Each factor is assigned a score, and the total is then compared to a cut-off. If it is above a certain level, it must go higher up the chain of command to get a certification. Many problems exist with it, though. There is insufficient data on which to base reliable risk assessments. The scores are approximations based on personal experience rather than objective evidence. The scores are open to manipulation. If you want to fly, there is generally a way to fudge the result. It is seen as another way to stop pilots from flying. More paperwork. There needs a lot of work, and good reliable data, to sell this effectively. The US Army has been using ORM for a number of years. They are seeing a drop in the mishap rate which is being attributed, at least in part, to ORM. Germans put forward their intention to require cranial MRIs of all aircrew applicants, in order to identify congenital intracranial vascular anomalies. Such anomalies will cause unexpected incapacitation without warning. Cost-benefit analyses were lacking. What is more, the case is what to do about the multitude of other findings. Don't go looking for something if you don't know what to do with it once you find it.

The main lectures were of great contrast. Dr Mustard, former director of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research was very brave and provoking when he championed a more welfare-oriented society and an increased role of government in many facets of life. Dr Dille former chief of the Civilian aeromedical Institute (CAA-CAMI) of the USA was conservative and benign in his review of major players in the history of aerospace medicine.

The trade display was impressive and bigger than ever. Shame I will be back in Australia next year. Now I will have to put my money up if I want to go to future meetings.