



NIGEL MEADOWS – HM SENIOR CORONER FOR AREA OF MANCHESTER CITY

INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF MRS ALLAH RAKHI ISMAIL

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO A REPORT ON ACTION TO PREVENT OTHER DEATHS

PURSUANT TO REGULATIONS 28 & 29 OF THE CORONERS (INVESTIGATIONS) REGULATIONS 2013

Introduction

The UK Civil Aviation Authority ('CAA') would first like to express its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mrs Ismail.

The CAA is a public corporation, established by Parliament in 1972 as an independent specialist aviation regulator. The CAA works so that:

- the aviation industry meets the highest safety standards,
- consumers have choice, value for money, are protected and treated fairly when they fly,
- through efficient use of airspace, the environmental impact of aviation on local communities is effectively managed and CO₂ emissions are reduced,
- the aviation industry manages security risks effectively.

The CAA has carefully considered the Regulation 28 Report to prevent future deaths issued by the Senior Coroner for Manchester City ('the Report'), including the following recommendation that is considered to be relevant to its role and functions:

The British Thoracic Society ('BTS') have already issued guidance for passengers travelling with respiratory conditions; namely, the BTS Clinical Statement on air travel for passengers with respiratory disease (<https://thorax.bmj.com/content/77/4/329>). However, this guidance does not cover trauma, as in this case. Whether or not guidance would be appropriate to issue to determine whether or not a person was fit to fly from a respiratory perspective in the context of trauma – Consideration should be given to formulating such guidance which can then be circulated more widely including to the airline industry.

The CAA was not an Interested Person at this inquest. As such, it did not have access to the evidence. When preparing this response, with a view to implementing future action, the CAA has relied on the information contained in the Report, together with the response disclosed by the BTS dated 29 March 2023 and information relating to physiological factors of relevance to flight safety that is already published by the International Civil Aviation Organisation ('ICAO'), and by the CAA itself.

Next Steps

Practical guidance on aviation medicine is contained in the ICAO published Manual of Civil Aviation Medicine¹. The main purpose of this manual is to assist, and guide designated medical examiners and licensing authorities in decisions relating to the medical fitness of licence applicants. The manual is also viewed as a useful supplement to properly supervised theoretical and practical post-graduate training in aviation medicine. Chapter 1 of the Manual - Physiological Factors of Relevance to Flight Safety, contains industry guidance that is directly relevant to the body's ability to tolerate reduced barometric pressure, which would be expected to be encountered whilst in flight.


The response to the Report, disclosed by the BTS dated 29 March 2023, refers to guidance that is also published on the CAA's website for air passengers who have experienced trauma or undergone surgery. The web page for this guidance can be found at the following link: <https://www.caa.co.uk/passengers/before-you-fly/am-i-fit-to-fly/guidance-for-health-professionals/surgical-conditions/>.

The CAA would expect operators in the aviation industry to be aware of the ICAO Manual of Civil Aviation Medicine and the CAA's published guidance.

The CAA has now amended its own guidance to include new information that is relevant to passenger fitness to fly, which reflects the recommendation in the Report. The following entry is included in the guidance published on the CAA's website under the section entitled: 'Surgical Conditions - Trauma':

"Passengers who have experienced traumatic injuries within 7 days prior to travel, including from falls or accidents of any nature, should contact their airline to determine their suitability to travel. This is particularly important with injuries affecting the chest, as these may cause cardio-respiratory decompensation at altitude."

The CAA will also discuss the content of the Report at the next UK Fitness to Fly Forum meeting on 5th September 2023. The Forum draws together considerable experience of those working in aviation medicine to highlight any new or developing medical issues which may act to limit passenger accessibility to air travel. This Forum is attended by medical representatives from several of the UK's largest airlines and is intended to share best practice across the aviation industry and the NHS.


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¹ Manual of Civil Aviation Medicine (Doc 8984), 3rd Edition, 2012.