

while there are new regulations designed to simplify procedures onboard ships, given the expected rise in the world fleet over the years to come, there are still hurdles to cross.

"Each flag state has its own mandatory medical regulations which vessels need to adhere to regardless of where they operate. The IMO and World Health Organisation have recently amended the medical regulations in the International Medical Guide for Ships to bring medical treatment for seafarers into the 21st Century. They have changed virtually all the treatments and updated the medical equipment," Mr MacDonald revealed.

"This has drastically reduced the number of medicines and pieces of equipment required to be held onboard some 90% of vessels currently operating. While there would be an initial expense in changing out old kits, the savings made on upkeep over a five year period would offset this," he added.

Aside from economic pressures, the sector is constantly exposed to legislative scrutiny, further complicating the trade operations of suppliers working on a multinational basis, according to Mr MacDonald: "Customs regulations have always had a major effect on medical supply and continue to do so. There are parts of the world, the USA for instance, where we just don't send goods because customs will refuse to let them through under any circumstances."

"In addition, the biggest threat to the medical supply sector will be the availability of reasonably dated products. Vessels store medicines in order to react to an incident which may never happen, and consequently want products with long shelf life to reflect this," he added, confirming a universally-applicable concern.

With a number of initiatives instilling the shipping markets, methods to economise products, save on costs, and promote environmental preservation are high on the menu. FAB Medical, with offices based in the US and the UK, emphasises the importance in maintaining control of provision distribution and ensuring the shelf life of medication.

The company stated: "Using our Medicines Management System we can control a ship's medical inventory onboard, and reduce waste by over ordering, tracking expiry dates and ensuring that medicine chests are compliant as required by the 'Medicines Act' legislation, recommended in the UK Merchant Shipping requirements."

Offering ships medical audit and certification, crew vaccinations, drug and alcohol testing, and equipment servicing and replacement; the company supplies a vast array of medicines and medical equipment under regulation of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and has recently upped its stake in the international marketplace in its provision of medical supplies to the 2008-2009 Volvo Ocean Race.

"FAB is only too aware of the unique way the maritime industry has to respond to emergencies at sea. Even when a vessel has come into port the size and nature of equipment to move goods or people on and off the ship can be extremely hazardous if in the wrong hands, and emergency medical test kits are an ideal solution on occasions whilst in remote places or between ports," it added.

While companies try to adapt to difficult market conditions, there is a pressing need to maximise margins and take the pill of innovation in order to remain competitive. The prerequisite nature of onboard medical supplies ensures that the market will have enough sustenance to thrive; it's more of a case of survival of the fittest, however, as the sector undergoes a surgical operation of financial and legislative sutures. ■

Wilson and Maestro Invest in LIFEFORCE

Since its official launch into the marine industry in October 2008, the acceptance of the LIFEFORCE Marine defibrillator from ship owners has been exceptional, the company has claimed.

Andy Carter LIFEFORCE Product Manager, said: "We have been delighted by the fact that responsible owners have identified the threat from sudden cardiac arrest posed to ships' crews and that the carriage of a marine Type Approved defibrillator is a real statement of their commitment to crew welfare."

Sudden Cardiac Arrest is the world's biggest killer, with over three million people dying from it every year. When a person suffers SCA, their heart's regular rhythm becomes chaotic or arrhythmic, which means it is not pumping blood around the body. Every minute that the heart is not beating lowers the odds of survival by 7% to 10%. After 10 minutes without defibrillation very few people survive.

The LIFEFORCE marine defibrillator is the first product of its type to be designed specifically for the marine environment and has been Type Approved by Germanischer Lloyd.



With a life saving medical device such as LIFEFORCE onboard, you need to be sure that it will deliver the life saving care when needed. Even after many years in a marine environment LIFEFORCE has been tested and approved to deliver this care.

The company have already equipped over 300 ships with LIFEFORCE in five months, protecting approximately 12,000 seafarers in the process. One forward thinking owner, Wilson Ship Management AS (Norway), have deployed LIFEFORCE on 80 dry cargo vessels. Thorbjørn Dalsøren, Maritime Personnel Manager, said: "At Wilson Ship Management, the safety of our crew is always given the highest priority. As part of this crew welfare commitment, we recognised the value of investing in the LIFEFORCE® specialist marine defibrillator for our entire fleet of owned vessels."

Having completed a broad market investigation, it became clear that Martek Marine was able to provide a marine-approved unit at reasonable cost, specifically tailored for the fairly unforgiving demands of the marine industry.