

# The AsMA Global Connection Story with ICAO

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Dear readers, AsMA members, and friends,

For this issue of our Journal, I had a conversation with Dr. Ansa Jordaan, the chief medical officer of ICAO at Montreal, who is responsible for the very foundations of our civil aviation medicine certification rules all over the world. Since she comes from South Africa, where she has held different positions in aviation medicine, we can speak the same language since Dutch is at the origin of Afrikaans and both languages are still very similar! The CAPSCA program in particular (please read further) is a very good example of collaboration between two different (international and national) sectors in dealing with medical problems such as pandemics: the aviation medicine sector and the public health sector, usually governed by different parts of national administrations, and are thus not used to working together.



## So Ansa, what exactly is your role?

I am Chief of the Aviation Medicine Section of ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation), which is a specialized agency of the United Nations.

## And can you tell me a little about what areas your organization is involved in?

ICAO's main objective is promoting safety in international civil aviation. This is achieved through:

- the development of relevant Standards and Recommended practices (SARPs), e.g. medical requirements for aviation licenses;
- the development of associated guidance material in the form of manuals and information circulars;
- assistance to States with implementation of the SARPs through symposia, training seminars, regional meetings, implementation kits, etc.;
- the coordination of global aviation initiatives through various global conferences and meetings.

The development of medical SARPs is done with the assistance of the MPSG (Medical Provisions Study Group). Through the MPSG ICAO consults with stakeholders and subject matter experts to develop proposals to amend SARPs. The MPSG also

assists with the development of guidance material. The MPSG consists of representatives from civil aviation authorities of various countries, international organizations, and industry bodies such as AsMA, IATA, IFALPA, etc., to ensure wide consultation and geographical representation.

In the past there have been three MPSG meetings (2004, 2007, and 2014). However, following the 39th ICAO Assembly in 2016, a number of medical SARPs involving different specialties have been identified that needed to be reviewed. It was subsequently agreed to have a number of MED Working Groups to address these topics and that each Working Group would be chaired by a member of the MPSG. Topics will be discussed at the MED Working Group level by subject matter experts, then presented by the Chair of the Working Group to the MPSG for consideration. The MPSG will discuss the recommendations further and assist ICAO with the development of proposals for amendment, which is then presented to the Air Navigation Commission and Council for review and approval.

Most of the work of the Working Groups and MPSG is done electronically and by means of teleconferences and webinars, but international conferences such as AsMA provide a good opportunity for personal interaction and meetings. It is envisaged that the MPSG will meet once a year.

From a medical perspective ICAO also assists the World Health Organisation (WHO) and States to mitigate the international spread of diseases through air travel by collaborating with key stakeholders and the implementation of the CAPSCA program (Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Aviation).

ICAO (along with other partners such as IATA, ACI, CDC, etc.) provides technical assistance to WHO by participating in working groups and attending meetings dealing with issues such as aircraft and airport disinfection and disinsection; providing data and flight information to assist WHO with risk assessments; and the planning of targeted interventions and disseminating information to our stakeholders. CAPSCA provides assistance to States to implement both



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.7PP.2018>

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public-health-related ICAO SARPs and aviation-related International Health Regulations.

Technically this is achieved through regional meetings, seminars and workshops; training workshops and exercises, including an online training component that will be launched soon; conducting assistance visits to States and airports; maintaining an information repository on the web ([www.capsca.org](http://www.capsca.org)); development of a flight app; and close collaboration with all our partners.

**What kind of relationship is there between ICAO and AsMA and how long has it existed?**

ICAO as an organisation has a very good and a long-standing relationship with AsMA, although I have no idea exactly how long! ICAO considers AsMA to be a leader in the aviation medical field, providing specialist knowledge and practical advice over a broad range of topics. ICAO relies on the specialist knowledge and expertise provided by AsMA to assist us with the development of Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and guidance material. AsMA is also a member of the ICAO MPSG (Medical Provisions Study Group).

**What works well in this relationship and what could be improved in our collaboration?**

There is a very strong collaboration between ICAO and AsMA, with good communication channels. AsMA always provides feedback and assistance to ICAO whenever we need it—often offering even additional assistance... I think what could be improved is for ICAO to provide more timely replies to AsMA!

**Do you have ideas for AsMA? For outreach and support to your organization, and/or for disseminating information from your organization?**

The aviation medicine fraternity, including AsMA, has not been much involved in the public health aspects of aviation. I think that collectively there is a lot of expertise within AsMA that could be applied within this field. This would include not only technical advice, but especially the sharing and dissemination of data and other relevant information between the aviation and public health sectors, as well as the sharing of information with employers and licence-holders.

ICAO is working with WHO and other stakeholders such as the IATA, ACI, World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the World Tourism Organisation, and others to develop an information and communication platform. It would be beneficial to include AsMA as a stakeholder as well.

**What plans do you have for AsMA meetings?**

There is a long tradition of the ICAO chief medical officers organizing a special ICAO session at each AsMA scientific meeting, open to everybody, at which the ongoing activities and future plans of the ICAO Aviation Medicine Section are presented, so I invite all colleagues to come, listen, and ask questions. Other working groups are active on international collaboration, but here attendance is by invitation. I'm certainly planning to continue these activities at the AsMA meetings and to expand where needed. I'm very happy to collaborate with this strong association for now and in the future!

So, Dr. Jordaan, many thanks for this interview of great interest to me and to our readers!

Roland