

## Operational Needs And Aero Medical Research\*

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Since the inception of the Aero Medical Society, there has been a radical transformation in the field of aviation. Man has already achieved phenomenal success in his quest for exploring space. It is, therefore, appropriate to pause for a moment and look along the path the Aero Medical Society has travelled so far, and to ask what action it should take so that in the next decade or so the Society may continue to play its role in enhancing flying efficiency, and in promoting flight safety of both Service and Civil aviation in India. The rapid advances in aeronautical technology pose a big challenge to Aero Medical specialists who have not only to match human endeavour with safety but also to ensure total effectiveness in a hostile environment.

I think the medical profession concerned with aviation must consider three questions:

First, what kind of doctors a modern Air Force requires? One thing is clear that it cannot function with second class doctors. The development of Service medical manpower requires a series of actions taken to fulfil specific medical service needs of each Service. Today, the quality of the young medical graduates who join the Services is not what we would like to have. Professional knowledge must be improved by working in large hospitals

under supervision before any medical officer is posted as Squadron Medical Officer. In my view, the medical man at the lowest rung of the ladder can contribute more than the most highly qualified specialist right at the top. I do not have to go into the reasons-as I would like to impress upon all concerned the fact that the Squadron Medical Officer is the most vital link in the chain of treatment and he is the only one who can, if he does his job efficiently, create an atmosphere of friendship and in turn confidence amongst our aviators. He can thus help in preventing the development of unhealthy practices, encourage correct food habits, insist through persuasion, advice and personal relations the emergence and continuation of an environment which would improve the physical standards and professional knowledge and thus promote the general well being of the aviators. A poor specimen could equally well do untold harm. I am sure this must and can only be avoided through our preparing young medical attendants for this very vital role as thoroughly as possible. I would go a stage further and say that individuals who don't show promise of being model aviation medicine practitioners should be weeded out in the very early stages. Incidentally, I would have our senior people look for and develop the qualities which will help to produce the man we want. In short, proper selection and training of young

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entrants must have a very high place in our plans and thought processes.

Secondly, I am very keen that we must develop adequate and effective research capability. This should keep pace with the operational needs of the newer aircraft introduced in Service on the one hand, and the indigenous aircraft industry on the other. Whilst I am aware of the good work done by the Institute of Aviation Medicine in the last few years, it is also my view that we have a long way to go to be contemporary with the rest of the world. I would like to see this record of success enlarged and research effort further developed in a phased manner and to meet the legitimate requirements of the Service.

Thirdly, the knowledge and experience gained by the aero-medical specialists must be applied to prevent aircraft accidents. These accidents are a big drain on our meagre resources and I would like your help in finding ways and means to reduce them. Whether it is the pilot or the maintenance engineer or the flight controller, he is a human being whose operational efficiency can be enhanced by appropriate recommendations. The Aero

Medical Society should make it its business to tackle this problem on a war footings from now onwards.

I welcome Group Captain Peter Howard who is an internationally renowned medical research scientist in the field of aviation medicine. He has come all the way from Farnborough, U.K., to deliver the Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee Memorial Oration. I wish to mention that we greatly appreciate our close collaboration with the R.A.F. Medical Service. Group Captain Howard's visit will help to strengthen our ties of friendship with the R.A.F.

I am very happy to see a large number of Civilian Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces here this morning. Your close association with the Air Force is a source of great pride and strength to us.

I am confident that the deliberations and discussions of the Aero Medical Society will prove useful in furthering the knowledge of medical science. I have great pleasure in inaugurating the 16th Annual Meeting of the Aero Medical Society of India.

