

Congleton Guardian
April 18 2003

LUCKY TO BE ALIVE *heart attack victim saved at 37,000ft*

By MARK HILDITCH

A CONGLETON man who suffered a heart attack on a transatlantic flight was saved after medics on the ground gave life-saving instructions to the cabin crew. International dressage judge, Stephen Clarke, 50, of Somerford Booths, made history by becoming the first person to receive an ECG in an aircraft. Stewardesses on the Chicago to Manchester flight received directions from doctors at an American hospital on how to use the electrocardiogram machine, when he fell ill at 37,000ft.

The results of the tests were beamed by satellite to doctors in Phoenix, Arizona, who diagnosed a heart attack.

They then gave detailed instructions to airline stewardess Karen Cornelius, Sally Cast and Ellen Davies, who were able to stabilise Mr Clarke until the aircraft landed two hours later in Manchester. He was then transferred to the cardiology unit at Wythenshawe Hospital.

The successful mile-high treatment has led to calls for other airlines to carry the specialist life-saving equipment.

Recovery

Mr Clarke, who has made a full recovery, said: 'I was very anxious at the time but I was amazed at how quickly the stewardesses reacted and how quickly the equipment was set up and information communicated.

'I had no idea this sort of equipment would be on an aeroplane and as it turns out I was very lucky. I was better off being on the flight than being at home. The doctors responded immediately and the stewardesses gave me the treatment that they advised from the doctor's box on the aircraft. The whole thing was so confidence-inspiring that I immediately felt much less anxious'

UK-Based BMI is the only airline currently using the Tempus health monitoring equipment, installed on its transatlantic planes.

The airline's chief medical officer Dr Graham Cresswell said: 'We've used Tempus many times since we installed it in May last year but this is first time that an ECG has needed to be transmitted from a commercial airliner in flight.

'I'm delighted that this the most demanding of the techniques involved, was so effective and that our considerable investment in this cutting-edge equipment has been justified.'

...and this is how Stephen was saved

THE state-of-the-art equipment enables trained cabin crew to obtain clinically accurate vital signs on any passenger taken ill on a flight.

The results are then transmitted instantaneously, to emergency medicine specialists MedLink in America.

Tempus 2000 is the first remote medical monitoring device designed specifically for non-expert use during a medical incident on board an aircraft.

Using an inbuilt modem the device monitors a passenger's blood pressure, pulse rate, temperature, electrocardiogram (ECG), blood oxygen and carbon dioxide levels.

This data is then sent, via the in-flight phone system, to physicians in the accident and emergency department of the central teaching hospital in Phoenix Arizona.

Medics then advise the crew on the best course of action.

Medlink physician Dr Robert Scott said: 'The 12 lead ECG tracing we received was virtually the same quality as I see in the emergency room. 'We take a lot of in-flight calls every day that include symptoms of chest pain, but very few are actually heart attacks.

History

'In this situation the patient did not have a history of heart problems, which would lead us to treat him on a conservative basis. 'However with the ECG confirming his condition and the exceptional assistance from the chief stewardess, we were able to treat much more aggressively and immediately utilised all of the appropriate onboard medical resources in support of the passenger.'

ENDS