

Fighting Fatigue: Understanding Fatigue Risks in Healthcare and the Maritime Industry - 11 December 2025

Presented by: Dr Laura Pickup and Dr Will Tutton

Summary of Presentation

This webinar examined fatigue as a critical but often under-recognised risk in safety-critical sectors, focusing on healthcare and the maritime industry. The speakers explained fatigue as a physiological state influenced by sleep deprivation, extended wakefulness, workload intensity, and circadian rhythms, emphasising that it affects both physical and cognitive performance. Evidence was presented showing that prolonged wakefulness and insufficient sleep can impair decision-making, reaction times, alertness, and motor control, increasing the likelihood of errors and incidents.

The discussion highlighted long shifts, night work, and increasing workload intensity as key contributors to fatigue. The speaker outlined documented impacts including reduced alertness, impaired judgement, increased risk-taking, diminished compassion, and associations with clinical errors and adverse outcomes. Fatigue was framed as a system-level risk rather than an individual failing, requiring organisational recognition and structured management.

Drawing on learning from other safety-critical industries, the webinar introduced fatigue risk management as a data-driven, systems-based approach incorporating predictive, proactive, and reactive elements. Practical actions discussed included analysing working hours and shift patterns, embedding fatigue considerations into risk assessments and investigations, improving rest opportunities, and strengthening safety culture.

In conclusion the speakers suggested that:

- Effective fatigue management requires organisational ownership, use of scientific evidence, and pragmatic, staged implementation rather than reliance on individual responsibility alone.
- Some industries such as aviation and rail have established management approaches to tackle fatigue
- Healthcare and Maritime are working towards this better practice and have significant issues with fatigue hazards.

If you are a SaRS Member and would like to watch the recording of the webinar please [click here](#).