

National Transportation Safety Board Marine Safety

### Medical Issues Mitchell A. Garber, MD, MPH, MSME



# **Medical Information Reviewed**

- Assistant Captain's medical records:
  - Pre-accident (primary care, specialists, dentists, pharmacy)
  - Post-accident (hospitalization)
  - Coast Guard (certification)
  - -NYC DOT (sick leave, return-to-work)

# **Medical Information Reviewed**

- Coast Guard medical oversight
  - -Review of applicable guidance
  - Interview with staff at USCG National Maritime Center
  - Interview of physician performing most recent exam 8/14/00 (also personal physician of assistant captain)

## **Medical Conditions/Medications**

- Medical conditions previously known:
  - High blood pressure 1989
  - High cholesterol 1999
  - Back pain: treated with tramadol 2/00
  - Insomnia: treated with zolpidem 5/00
- Discovered post-accident
  - Coronary artery disease
  - Congenital heart abnormalities

### **Possible Medical Causes**

- Upright but unresponsive 2 minutes
- Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA, "ministroke")
  - Likelihood increased by congenital anomalies
  - Not highly likely, no evidence or recurrence
- Seizure
  - Likelihood increased by tramadol
  - Not highly likely, no evidence/recurrence
- Other cardiac, psychological, fatigue

## **Coast Guard Medical Oversight**

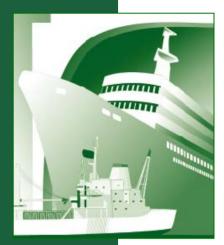
- Assistant captain's conditions and medications raised certification questions
- Assistant captain and physician did not provide information on meds/conditions
- CG could not evaluate meds/conditions

# **Coast Guard Medical Oversight**

- Existing elements:
  - Comprehensive evaluation form
  - Authority over certification
  - Limited retention of submitted data:
    - Hardcopies of submitted paperwork
    - Data storage system to record denials, etc.

# **Coast Guard Medical Oversight**

- Notable deficiencies
  - Limited guidance on annual examinations
  - All exams not tracked
  - Potential inconsistencies in performance, evaluation
  - No requirements for reporting between exams
  - Limited ability to perform independent occupational evaluations



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