

IPAAC 25 Abstracts & Biography

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:	4
- Dr Ansa Jordaan. Chief, Aviation Medicine Section, ICAO	4
- Dr Ben Johnston MBChB, MAvMed,	4
- Henry Gourdji. Director, MSc, CD. Director Safety Strategy and Policy, Flight Safety Foundation.	5
- Sara Nelson. Chair, Civil Aviation Sector of ITF	5
SPEAKERS:	7
- Aedrian Bekker MA MS	7
- Alois Farthofer	7
- Andrew LeBovidge	7
- Annie Indzeoski	7
- Bonnie Eckman - OTA/L	7
- Dr. Charlie Curreri - IPAAC President Emeritus	8
- Chris Finlayson - Executive Director PMHC.	8
- Claire Beharrell	9
- Daniel DeGryse - Chicago Fire Dpt. Battalion Chief (ret.)	9
- Daniel Ospina Trujillo - Captain	10
- David Fielding, Captain	10
- Doug Mckibbon - M.Ed., R.Psych., CEAP - Blue Sky Up	10
- Dr. Eran Schenker, Chief Medical Officer, CAAI	11
- Evie Garces, VP of Line Maintenance in American Airlines Technical Ops	
12	
- Geetanjali Khadria	12
- Dr. Gerhard Fahnenbruck, clinical director, Stiftung Mayday	12
- Heather Healy	14
- Helena Sá Pombares	14
- Herwin Bongers MAv, Captain	15
- Dr. Ismail Gevrek, Captain	15
- Jessica Auslander, MA, PhD	16

- Jóhann Wium Magnússon	16
- Ken Morse	17
- Dr. Kimberly Perkins, First Officer	17
- Laila Stein	18
- Lydia Schock	19
- Marija Savikj	19
- Mark Berg M.A. LPC-S, CEAP, SAP, ACC, CCISM	19
- Markus Holowenko	20
- Captains Masa Miyata and Max Matsumoto	20
- Dr Paul Farnan	21
- Peter Whitten.	22
- Priya Doobaree	23
- Dr. Quay Snyder MD, MSPH	23
- Dr. Robert Zeglin PhD, MPA, NCC, CST, CFI-I	23
- Professor Robert Bor	24
- Riley Madsen	24
- Dr. Sandra "Salty" Salzman, LtCol, MC, USAF	24
- Sky Overbo, PhD	25
- Dr. Surendra Sodhi	26
- Tony Lepore	27
- Dr. William R Hoffman MD	27
- Wendy Santilhano	28
- Zoe Thompson	28
WORKSHOPS:	29
- From Barriers to Bridges: Exploring the role of culture in Peer Support	29
- Navigating the emotional labour of being a peer: A peer community-led approach	31
- Overcoming the barriers which prevent aviation personnel seeking PSP help.	32
- Shared Experiences and Skill Development – an MHP Workshop.	35

- The Power of Peer Support - Identifying challenges and exploring solutions	36
- The Role of a Mental Health Professional in Aviation Peer Support Programs.	37
- Using Data and Storytelling in Peer Support Programs: A masterclass in understanding and engaging stakeholders	38
- Walk the Talk, an exercise in self management; Air India Peer Support Programmes, “Buddy@AI”	40
PANELS:	42
- Civilian Wings, Hot Zone: Peer Support in a world of conflict and crisis.	45
- Empowering Support Through Unity: Leveraging Union Peer Assistance Programs to Serve Distinct Workgroup Needs and Advance Systemwide Best Practices at United Airlines	46
- Lessons Learned from Uplift: Building and Sustaining a Collegiate Peer Support Program	47
- Regulatory, Program Implementation and Research Updates on Aviation Mental Health.	49
- The Next Generation in Aviation Mental Health	51

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- Dr Ansa Jordaan. Chief, Aviation Medicine Section, ICAO

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: *I/CAO's Approach to Risk Management in Mental Health, including Peer Support*



Dr Ansa Jordaan joined the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in October 2015 and is currently the Chief of the Aviation Medicine Section, responsible for aviation medical standards and the CAPSCA programme (preventing transmission of communicable disease by air). She graduated in 1989 as a medical doctor and has two post-graduate degrees (Aerospace Medicine and Occupational Health). In 1999, she established the Aviation Medicine department in the South African Civil Aviation Authority, after having worked in the South African Military Institute of Aviation Medicine. In 2003, she left the CAA and worked as an Independent Consultant in the aviation industry until 2007. She then joined South African Airways where she was the Medical Director until June 2011. After

SAA she left the aviation industry to work at the Life Occupational Health Group, where she was the Project Director of Occupational Health for Transnet Freight Rail. In 2012 she returned to aviation and was the Medical Director of Occupational Health at International SOS. She is a member of the Aerospace Medicine Association (AsMA), the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (IAASM), the Airlines Medical Directors Association (AMDA) and provides consultation services to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

- Dr Ben Johnston MBChB, MAvMed,

MBChB, MAvMed, PGDipOccMed

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: *An Airline Operator's Experience Embedding Mental Wellness into SMS.*

Dr Ben Johnston, General Manager People Safety and Health, Air New Zealand.

In 2024 the Aerospace Medical Association Mental Health Working Group drafted a resolution recommending that “ICAO and member states require that aviation organizations incorporate an integrated program of health and wellness as part of their SMS programs that identifies hazards associated with workload stressors and implements efforts to control the associated hazards” This presentation will outline one airline’s experience with integrating mental health and wellness into their SMS, using the ICAO Framework of four core components of SMS (Policy and Objectives, Risk Management, Assurance and Promotion) and their 12 interdependent elements. Current strengths and weaknesses will be examined, and key learnings shared.



Dr Ben Johnston is the GM of people and safety at Air New Zealand. Prior to that he served for seven years as the Chief Medical Officer for the airline. He was in general practice from 2002 until he decided to pursue a full-time aviation medicine career and joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 2006.

Operational experience in the RNZAF included aeromedical evacuations from the South Pacific and Middle East, including disaster relief operations such as the tsunami in Samoa in 2009 and the Christchurch earthquake of 2011. He was deployed to Afghanistan as part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan

province in 2010.

In addition to this he is a clinical senior lecturer in Aviation Medicine for the University of Otago and he remains involved in teaching aviation medicine for the RNZAF as a reservist.

Ben has a Masters in Aviation Medicine from University of Otago and is an advanced trainee with the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. He is an associate fellow of the Aerospace Medical Association and secretary of the Aviation Medical Society of New Zealand.

- **Henry Gourdji. Director, MSc, CD. Director Safety Strategy and Policy, Flight Safety Foundation.**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: *Aviation Mental Health as a Flight Safety Determinant: From Evidence to SMS Practice*



Henry has a lifetime of experience working in the aviation sector having held prominent senior management and technical positions in the international arena. He is currently, Director Safety Strategy and Policy with the Flight Safety Foundation, and prior to that, spent over twenty-two years with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). He has held such positions as Head of Strategic Planning, Coordination and Partnerships in the Office of the ICAO Secretary General and led the Office responsible for developing and managing the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), one of ICAO's leading programs, known today as the world's 'watchdog' for aviation safety. Mr. Gourdji previously worked in the Canadian civil service, including ten years with Transport Canada,

managing Canada's Civil Aviation National Audit Programme. Mr Gourdji holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Strategic Studies with the Canadian Armed Forces. He holds a Canadian aircraft maintenance and engineering license for airframes and power plants and is an active pilot with a multi-engine rating. He retired after 31 years of Canadian military reserve service with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Mr. Gourdji received the Military Canadian Decoration for his service to Canada and was the recipient of the Flight Safety Foundation President's Citation award in 2011 for his contribution to world aviation safety. In 2019, he was awarded the prestigious Meritorious Service Cross (M.S.C) by the Governor General of Canada for monitoring compliance and augmenting safety procedures around the world and enhancing Canada's reputation as an international leader in the field of civil aviation.

- **Sara Nelson. Chair, Civil Aviation Sector of ITF**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: *Advancing Safety Through Peer Support Programs.*

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a democratic affiliate-led transport authority. We fight passionately to improve workers' lives, connecting more than 700 affiliated trade unions from 150 countries to secure rights, equality, and justice for workers' globally. We are the voice for nearly 16.5 million transport workers across the world.

We create impact at scale across all transportation sectors including civil aviation. The ITF is leading the call for a safer, more resilient, and sustainable global aviation industry. We engage with international policy institutions including ICAO, ILO, OECD, and employer federations including IATA, ACI, ASA and CANSO. Together we focus on issues of common concern including safety and health.

Sara Nelson, Chair of the Civil Aviation Sector of ITF and International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO will provide a 45 minute overview of :

The value of global networking and cooperation amongst civil aviation's workers, operators, and regulators in addressing current health and safety issues facing aviation workers, especially mental well-being.

How the mental wellness of all of aviation safety sensitive employees, not just those medically certified, is critical to the safety and security of the global aviation system;

The role and value of peer support programs for aviation's safety-sensitive workers

Action steps that all aviation stakeholders can pursue to partner around the development and enhancement of peer support programs.

- "Participants will have a more in-depth understanding of the critical role of workers in advancing the health and safety of the aviation industry, including through the use of peer programs.
- Participants will have an expanded appreciation of the connection between aviation safety and the mental well-being of all safety sensitive employees.
- Participants will be able to articulate the rationale of why aviation stakeholders should partner in developing aviation peer support programs as a core element of their SMS



Sara Nelson is the chair of the Civil Aviation Sector of ITF. She has served as the International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO since 2014, and is currently serving her third four-year term. She first became a union member in 1996 when she was hired as a Flight Attendant at United Airlines and today she represents 50,000 of aviation's first responders at 20 airlines. The New York Times called her "America's most powerful flight attendant" for her role in helping to end the 35-day Government Shutdown and InStyle Magazine placed her on their Top 50 Badass Women list.

In the broader Labor Movement, Sara serves as a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, the Communication Workers of America Executive Board, the Transportation Trades Department Executive Board, the Labor Advisory Committee for Trade Negotiations and Trade Policy, and the Chair of International Transport Workers Federation Civil Aviation Steering Committee. She has received the prestigious Jones-Blizzard Award from the United Mine Workers of America, the AFL-CIO MLK Drum Major for Justice Award, the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award from Jobs with Justice, the National Consumers League Trumpeter Award, Women's March Spotlight Award, and Massachusetts Teachers Association Friend of Labor Award.

SPEAKERS:

- Aedrian Bekker MA MS

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Alois Farthofer

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Andrew LeBovidge

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Annie Indzeoski

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Bonnie Eckman - OTA/L

SPEAKER: *From Turbulence to Tranquility: Sensory Modulation for Aviation Professionals.* 2

Aviation professionals operate in high-pressure environments that demand sharp focus, rapid decision-making, and emotional resilience. Yet, the constant exposure to cabin noise, fluctuating altitudes, and high-stress interpersonal interactions can result in sensory overload, disrupted sleep, and challenges maintaining work-life balance. While in-flight performance is essential, the ability to decompress, reset, and recover during off-duty hours is equally vital for long-term well-being and professional sustainability.

This session introduces sensory modulation strategies designed specifically to help aviation professionals transition from the turbulence of duty to the tranquility of rest. Grounded in evidence-based practices from sensory regulation and trauma-informed care, this presentation provides practical, accessible tools to manage overstimulation and support meaningful life balance and wellness.

Specialist in Sensory Modulation & Trauma-Informed Recovery



Bonnie Eckman is a dedicated mental health and addiction recovery professional with over a decade of experience in trauma-informed care. With a background in Occupational Therapy (OTA), Bonnie specializes in sensory modulation techniques to help individuals navigate PTSD, trauma, nervous system dysregulation, and emotional burnout particularly in high-stress professions such as emergency response and aviation professionals.

Bonnie has developed and delivered specialized treatment programs tailored to the unique needs of first responders and aviation professionals, focusing on resilience, self-regulation, and recovery. Her work has supported police officers, firefighters, EMTs, 911 dispatchers, flight crews, and others whose roles demand peak performance under pressure.

An experienced educator and sought-after speaker, Bonnie has presented her work at leading national conferences, including the FADAP Conference, Society for Social Work Leadership, Northwest Peer Support Conference, CIT International, and the PTACC Conference. She is also a frequent guest on industry podcasts and provides direct training to first responder departments across the country.

Bonnie's work is grounded in the belief that intentional, sensory-based recovery strategies are essential for sustaining mental health and life balance in high-stress careers. Her

mission is to equip professionals with the tools they need to “land softly” after each shift—and build a foundation for long-term well-being.

- Dr. Charlie Curreri - IPAAC President Emeritus

SPEAKER: Predictive Effects of Mental Health Literacy and Self-Stigma on Help-Seeking Attitudes Among Aviators.

It has been well documented that many pilots avoid mental health care for fear of losing their medicals. What is not known is to what extent mental health literacy and reduced self-stigma predict increased help-seeking attitudes among pilots. A recent quantitative correlation-predictive study examined the extent to which mental health literacy and self-stigma, considered collectively and individually, explained the link in predicting help-seeking attitudes among commercial airline pilots. Two research questions focused on whether mental health literacy and self-stigma, individually and combined, predicted help-seeking attitudes among commercial airline pilots. Data was collected from a sample of 106 active and line-qualified commercial airline pilots at a major legacy airline in North Texas. The results showed that mental health literacy and self-stigma, combined, significantly explained the variance of help-seeking attitudes among commercial airline pilots. Individually, mental health literacy explained some of the variance in help-seeking attitudes among pilots. However, self-stigma, individually, significantly explained the variance in help-seeking attitudes among pilots.

In this presentation, the learners will be able to identify the components of mental health literacy, aspects of lowering self-stigma, and how to improve mental health literacy and help-seeking attitudes among pilots, whether in university settings, air carriers, or business pilots. In short, this session will help aviation stakeholders develop collaborative programs with unions and other representatives to reduce stigma and improve help-seeking attitudes among pilots.



Dr. Charlie Curreri is a retired A-320 captain and founder/senior manager of Project Wingman, an industry-leading pilot peer assistance program for over 14,000 pilots at American Airlines. He is the President Emeritus of the International Peer Aviation Assist Coalition, a highly recognized international consortium of aviation peer programs and regulators established in March 2018, and the Director of the Center for Aviation Mental Health (C4AMH.com).

Dr. Curreri is a retired Air Force F-16 combat veteran of Desert Storm with over 3000 hours of fighter/instructor time. He is also a licensed professional counselor in Texas and holds a Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Grand Canyon University in Arizona. He recently served as the Co-Chair on the FAA's "Mental Health Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee" in 2024 and previously served on the FAA's "Pilot Fitness Aviation Rulemaking Committee" in 2015.

Charlie has been married for over 38 years and has six children and nine grandchildren!

- Chris Finlayson - Executive Director PMHC.

SPEAKER: Enhancing Mental Health Support Through Political Advocacy.

In recent years, the aviation industry has seen huge strides forward in building, maintaining, and marketing peer support programs. These programs are effective, well known, and free for pilots, but why do we still see a reluctance for pilots to engage with these programs? Recent studies suggest that the main drive for pilots to avoid any mental health treatment is fear of certificate loss.

The Pilot Mental Health Campaign has a unique viewpoint on the efforts to reform mental health care in the United States. If pilots are afraid of losing their certification, ultimately the industry will need to address the regulatory processes around mental health certification. PMHC focuses

directly on advocating for reform within the state and federal government to modernize mental health certification. As a political grassroots organization, we have consolidated aviator's stories and experiences with mental health struggles, turned those struggles into legislation, and have introduced that legislation in the United States Congress.

This presentation will focus on the timeline of how PMHC came to exist, how we drafted our legislation, how we lobby for support, and where we are currently with the legislative process. We will present data that shows the reluctance of seeking any sort of mental health care is still prevalent in the industry. We will also discuss how to replicate our efforts and success in other regulatory bodies around the world.

Attendees of the presentation will gain a greater understanding of political advocacy and how that affects the success of peer support programs. They will see the data that will suggest that peer support and quality mental health treatment will only progress so far. Regulatory change is required for peer programs to be completely effective. They will also see that grassroots advocacy is effective for change.

Peer support programs are effective ways in capturing an aviator's struggles with mental health symptoms. However, they are currently operating with one hand tied behind their back, because of the regulatory systems that are still in place to medically certify safety sensitive personnel. This presentation will explain the how and why behind political advocacy to shape complete mental health reform.



Chris Finlayson is the Executive Director of the Pilot Mental Health Campaign, the first and only political advocacy campaign in the United States dedicated to reforming mental health aeromedical policy.

To date, he has helped to successfully lead two pieces of legislation in the United States Congress to reform the regulation around mental health certification. Chris is also a First Officer at United Airlines, flies the Airbus 320 family, but has been on disability since 2021 as he seeks medical certification for SSRI treatment.

Previously, Chris served as the Minneapolis Regional Chief Pilot for Endeavor Air. Before his management role, he actively volunteered for several ALPA Committees at Endeavor, including the Critical Incident Response Committee, Security Committee Chair, and the Grievance Committee. He currently resides Minneapolis, Minnesota with his wife and two daughters.

- Claire Beharrell

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Daniel DeGryse - Chicago Fire Dpt. Battalion Chief (ret.)

SPEAKER: *The Art of Intervention.*

Establishing trust and a strong connection with anyone may present challenges, especially with those who are struggling with their mental wellness. Drawing from his forty years in the clinical counseling arena and experience as an interventionist, Dan will share insights regarding considerations and approaches helpful when engaging with an individual contemplating change in his/her behavior. He will offer techniques that assist in creating an atmosphere of understanding to boost the individual's level of comfort, willingness to engage, desire to change, and promote trust throughout the interaction(s).

Dan is currently a consultant with Recovery Ways. He retired as Battalion Chief with the Chicago Fire Department in 2019. During his fire career, Dan was also the Coordinator of



the Chicago Firefighters Union Local 2 Employee Assistance Program and established their peer support team.

Dan has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Wabash College. In 1986, he began his clinical career in behavioral health providing individual, group, and family therapy. Dan is certified as an Addictions Counselor and nationally as an Employee Assistance Professional. Dan has always held a passion for raising awareness, spreading knowledge, and fostering discussion regarding mental wellness for all responders. He has been a trusted advisor and

instructor for the International Association of Firefighters, the National Council for Behavioral Health, Responder Strong, and the Illinois Fire Service Institute.

- Daniel Ospina Trujillo - Captain

SPEAKER; *MELIORA: Aviation Mental Health.*

In this presentation we would like to present our program to attend mental health needs from aviation personnel, MELIORA was designed with the needs of the industry in mind, comprising a prevention module as one of the key aspects, having peer support as the back bone, and presenting our take on long term recovery sustainability; Continuous After Care.

Through MELIORA we hope to reach South Americas needs, which up until now have been neglected by regulators and operators alike. Our program comprises 16 carefully selected peers from 4 different airlines, an aviation psychologist, an AME, and four associated expert psychiatrists extensively trained in EMDR.

Having been born after Germany's 2023 IPAAC, we would like to present to the floor the program that was built upon that conference and with the help of the network within IPAAC, we hope that the guests of this year's IPAAC take an interest in our methodology and our passion for aviation mental health and the positive impact we believe will have within our industry.



Daniel Ospina is an airline captain with over 15 years of experience in commercial aviation. A dedicated advocate for pilot mental health, he is the founder of Meliora and a former chief pilot, committed to driving meaningful change in the industry. With a passion for fostering a culture of well-being and resilience among aviators, he actively contributes to initiatives aimed at improving mental health awareness in aviation.

Beyond the flight deck, he is a devoted father of two, balancing his professional expertise with a deep commitment to both his family and the future of the industry. Through personal experiences and an acquired passion for mental health and the ability to help others he hopes to be able to reach colleagues and regulators alike to drive changes that can last in time.

- David Fielding, Captain

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Doug Mckibbon - M.Ed., R.Psych., CEAP - Blue Sky Up

SPEAKER: *Mental health support tailored to the worker's psychological/professional profile.*

Providing mental support to aviation professionals requires a distinct approach tailored to each work group. For example, supporting the resolution of an AME's presenting mental health issue may take a very different approach from a pilot or flight attendant. It's critically important to understand and incorporate the aviation professional's work environment and style of thinking and

behaviours with the appropriate mental health intervention and support. We'll examine the unique and essential features of the AMEs, pilots, and flight attendants, as well as the risk factors each group faces in their work and personal lives. We'll discuss how to best support the mental health of AMEs based on their unique workplace perspective and provide them with the essential tools needed for psychological well-being.



I've worked in employee assistance programs (EAP) for nearly 40 years – both as an internal and external EAP professional, generally in safety-sensitive industries. More than 20 years of my career have been involved with aviation (internal EAP with Continental and United Airlines; Calgary-based external consultant for pilots and mechanics since 2017). My aviation scope of practice has incorporated peer/recovery monitoring within the HIMS context (both in the United States and Canada), formal psychological evaluations for pilots who present ADHD and substance use issues, disability management and treatment of mental health and substance use issues in safety-sensitive workplaces, and CISD service delivery.

- Dr. Eran Schenker, Chief Medical Officer, CAAI

SPEAKER: Peer-to-peer pilot support activity in Combat Euphoria – A Hidden Safety Risk When Returning From Combat Air Missions to Commercial Flight.

Following high-intensity military operations, fighter pilots may experience a transient state known as Combat Euphoria – a neuropsychological condition characterized by heightened confidence, emotional elevation, and diminished risk perception. While this response may be adaptive in a military context, it poses significant safety risks in civilian aviation, where discipline, adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs), and risk mitigation are paramount.

The study objective was to identify and assess the safety implications of combat euphoria among Air Force pilots returning from combat missions to commercial flight, and to develop a national resilience strategy to mitigate associated risks.

The cultural divergence between military and civilian aviation—“mission above all” vs “safety above all”—amplifies the risk. Combat euphoria, while not pathological, requires recognition as a predictable, time-limited risk state. Without targeted support and awareness, it may lead to reduced hazard identification and impaired decision-making in commercial operations.

Combat euphoria is a natural yet hidden risk in the transition from military to civilian flying. Through early recognition, culturally sensitive intervention, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, the aviation industry can preserve both flight safety and pilot dignity.

Recommendations developed from the study will be shared.



Dr. Eran Schenker is the Chief Medical Officer of the CAAI, where he oversees national aviation medical policy, pilot fitness evaluation, and aircrew safety programs. A licensed emergency physician and aviation medical examiner, Dr. Schenker brings over two decades of experience spanning aerospace medicine, digital health innovation, and pharmaceutical leadership.

He previously served as Medical Director at Merchavia Holdings, VP Medical Affairs at Kamada and Neurim Pharmaceuticals, and as Chief Medical Innovation Officer for several med-tech startups. As a space medicine pioneer, he founded the Israel Aerospace Medicine Institute and has collaborated with NASA and international space research bodies.

Dr. Schenker holds an M.D. from Ben-Gurion University, an MBA from Northwestern University (Kellogg), and a Master's in Health Informatics from George Washington University. He is a graduate of the International Space University and a mentor in Israel's 8400 HealthTech Network.

- Evie Garces, VP of Line Maintenance in American Airlines Technical Ops

SPEAKER: *Peer Support at American Airlines Technical Operations.*

During Evie's presentation, she will discuss the various peer support programs at American Airlines with a focus on the Technical Operations team. Each year, Evie invites 100 female aviation maintenance technicians (airplane mechanics) to American's headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, for two days of support, team building and sharing strategies for success in a typically male-dominated field. Attendees will learn about American's various peer support groups across our workgroups and be encouraged to implement similar strategies at their organizations.



Evita "Evie" Garces is Vice President of Line Maintenance in American's Technical Operations division. In this role, she leads American's line maintenance professionals and oversees all line maintenance operations for the airline's mainline fleet.

Prior to this role, Evie served as Managing Director of Maintenance Operations Control where she championed efforts to drive a stronger focus on compliance and safety in maintenance activities and led the team responsible for supporting the daily performance of Tech Ops. She was also Managing Director of Line Maintenance where she led various stations, including Chicago and the central region, and Managing Director of Base Maintenance Strategic Planning. She began her career with American in 2001 as an aviation

maintenance technician. Evie has long been a champion and mentor for other women interested in pursuing a career in aviation. She is a member of the Association for Women in Aviation Maintenance and, in 2019, Evie was named a Top 10 Corporate LATINA Executive of the Year by Latina Style. She is a proud mom who serves on the board of the La Academia De Estrellas Charter School in Dallas and on the alumni board of the Aviation High School in New York. Evie graduated from the Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology with a Bachelor of Science in aircraft maintenance. She earned a Master of Business Administration from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

- Geetanjali Khadria

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Dr. Gerhard Fahnhenbruck, clinical director, Stiftung Mayday

SPEAKER: *Peer Support: How to deal with large scale events.*

Peer Support programs in aviation are usually focussing on singular events for one crew or on individual crew members in a crisis. There are three reasons, why an individual crew member usually calls a Peer Support program for support:

- The crew member could call after a critical incident, which in most cases is defined as an incident, which has been life threatening for the individual or a person nearby.
- They could be triggered by a complicated or complex situation or a mental health and/or training issue and very often by a combination of different topics from these categories at the same time, overwhelming the coping mechanisms of that individual.

- The third reason for a crisis and a call could be the development of a substance misuse issue, often in combination with one of the mentioned topics above.

But Peer Support can also be utilised for large scale events, where more than one crew and maybe a company or even several companies could be involved.

Examples are the 9/11 attacks (2001), SARS (2003), Tsunami in Indonesia (2004), Mumbai's terrorist attacks (2008), Japan's earthquake (2011) or the Germanwings event (2015). Despite of the very different nature of these events all of them have in common, that a huge number of crew members have been affected by that. In most cases not only the crews directly involved but also other crew members have been affected.

Stiftung Mayday has been involved in all the above events and developed procedures to enable their team to deal with these.

The presentation will focus on these bigger events and the well-established procedures to support affected crew member but also focus on how to make sure that the involved Peers and the whole team remains emotionally stable. It will also focus on the needed procedures and protocols of companies to enable Peer Support teams to support companies in a crisis.

Learning objectives:

- The participants will learn, how to set up a Peer Support program, which is able to deal with large scale events as defined above.
- The participant will also learn about the importance of a preparation of procedures, the procedures itself and the "contracts" to be made with stake holder upfront.

- Hanna Kerr, First Officer BA

SPEAKER: Breathwork for Aviators (and those who support them)

How often are peers thinking about cases after talking to clients on the phone? Peers are not always able to switch off to the pressures that peer support brings. Through discussion of the speaker's experiences with tough cases, she will discuss ways for peers to take care of themselves better and techniques to switch off and relax from being a peer supporter.

Understanding that if a person is not controlling the mind, there is no control of themselves. Fight, flight or freeze will kick in until control is regained through controlling one's breath. This needs to be taught to aviation peers as they are often in emotionally intense or stressful scenarios with clients, and may lack the time or knowledge on how to regulate their emotions or thoughts easily. Mastering breathwork techniques could benefit the programme as a whole by increasing peer resilience and promoting self monitoring within groups.

Yoga breathing is not presented well to people who are not interested in yoga, however, the tools are hugely beneficial and the aviation community is missing out on the vast benefits that breathwork brings. Analytical people who use their minds more than their bodies, need these tools too. The LAPD, navy seals and commandos are all taught breathing techniques, and communities in aviation desperately need an easy way to control high stress.

The breathing the speaker will teach is an easy, simple way to get control in any scenario and promotes care of each other and the group. Following 10-15 minutes of teaching breathwork and relaxation tools, a discussion about how it makes everyone feel and why it works will follow. The speaker will touch on the nervous system and where this can be used in peer support. These are practical measures to help peers before, during and after calls.



Hanna's experience in breathwork comes from a background in yoga teaching. Having completed 350 hours of yoga teacher training, 50 hours of breathwork instructor training and 50 hours of meditation instructor training, Hanna teaches classes regularly. As a pilot she has used breathing to great effect in her personal and professional life and shares them with her peer support community, becoming a regular feature of each in-

person group training sessions. The techniques themselves are non-invasive, non- stress inducing and are all relaxation based.

Hanna is a kind, happy, positive person who loves interacting with people and enjoys community. A First Officer and CRM trainer with British Airways with previous experience as Cabin Crew, Hanna has a huge passion for aviation and is incredibly passionate about her flying job. Shortly after becoming a pilot, Hanna became hugely interested in mental health and psychology and decided to pursue a BSc Psychology at The Open University UK, which she completed in May 2025.

At a flight operations meeting in 2018, the peer support programme was presented and Hanna was inspired, setting her sights on being part of Speedbird PAN. A proud member of the team, Hanna has introduced breathwork to the group with great success and champions individual and group care amongst her peer community.

With a passion for helping people, Hanna wishes to spread this message and bring a different view to peer care and pilot wellbeing. Hanna prides herself on presenting yoga traditions in a digestible, easy way for corporates and people who are not interested in yoga. Her teaching benefits individuals looking to learn easy ways of calming themselves in any scenario, relaxing their minds, switching off and dealing with heavy energy/emotions in life with greater ease.

- Heather Healy

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Helena Sá Pombares

SPEAKER: Behind the Role: Understanding Motivations, Perceptions, Challenges, and Well-being of Aviation Peer Support Volunteers

As aviation is a high-stress, safety-critical profession, peer support programmes have become increasingly important. These programmes offer employees who are experiencing different types of issues, access to trained colleagues who provide confidential assistance, support, and signposting to professional services. Despite their growing prevalence, there remains a gap in the published aviation research regarding the lived experiences of peer supporters themselves.

Using semi-structured interviews with 25 aviation peer support volunteers, this study explored their experiences as peers in the industry, their motivations, perceptions and the challenges they face, and the psychological impact of their roles. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify key themes.

The research identified three overarching themes: The Drive to Help Others, Insights and Perceptions on Peer Support Dynamics, and The Helper's Journey: Well-being and Coping in Peer Support Roles. Volunteers were primarily motivated by altruism, empathy, and personal experiences of adversity, with many expressing a strong desire to help others and contribute to safety within their organisations. Secondary motivations included personal gratification, professional growth, and a sense of fulfilment.

Trust and confidentiality emerged as essential to the peers' insights and perceptions of the success of peer support initiatives, enabling peer supporters to build rapport and sustain relationships. Core skills such as active listening, empathy, non-judgment, and humility were frequently mentioned as key

components of effective peer work. Volunteers also described their role as contributing to broader cultural change, particularly in reducing mental health stigma and encouraging help-seeking behaviours within aviation.

However, the role is not without emotional costs when considering the peer's journey. Volunteers reported challenges such as emotional fatigue and the weight of responsibility in supporting others. Many described using personal coping strategies, including self-care routines, mindfulness, supervision, and engaging in hobbies to maintain their own well-being.

Recommendations include strengthening training programmes for peer supporters, and ensuring robust support systems for peers, regular psychological supervision, and access to mental health

resources for the volunteers. Formally recognising and valuing their contributions as peers was also considered important. Further research is also needed on the issues identified on a larger scale, as well as studies to evaluate the long term positive and negative impacts on the volunteers.



Helena Sá Pombares is a licensed Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist, EuroPsy certified, with expertise in aviation and mental health. She integrates her private clinical practice with her background as an ex-Cabin Crew member and Peer Support Trainer, combining psychological expertise with operational insight into safety-critical environments. Helena holds an MSc in Human Factors in Aviation, is completing an MSc in Clinical and Health Psychology, and is a member of the Blake Emergency Response Team.

- **Herwin Bongers MAv, Captain**
(See WORKSHOPS)

- **Dr. Ismail Gevrek, Captain**

SPEAKER: *Understanding the Subjective Impact of Fatigue on Physical and Social Functioning in Safety-Critical Aviation Personnel*

Fatigue is a persistent human factor risk in aviation, especially among individuals in safety-critical roles such as pilots, air traffic controllers, and maintenance technicians. The current study investigates how aviation professionals perceive the effects of fatigue on their physical performance and daily social functioning. This perception-based approach is critical for the development of tailored peer support strategies and fatigue risk management frameworks that consider individual vulnerability and occupational realities.

The study involved 35 participants working in aviation-related safety roles. Each completed an 8-item Likert-type questionnaire designed to assess self-reported fatigue and its consequences. The statements focused on physical tiredness, ease of fatigue, task performance, daily functioning, and the extent to which fatigue impairs social and professional life. Respondents rated their agreement on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to evaluate group-level trends and variance.

The item “Fatigue affects my physical performance” received the highest mean score ($M = 8.75$), indicating that most participants acknowledged a direct and significant influence of fatigue on their physical capabilities. On the other hand, the statement “Fatigue prevents my work, family, and social life” scored the lowest average ($M = 4.00$), suggesting that social disruptions may be underreported or underestimated within professional aviation cultures.

A notable feature of the findings is the variation in perceived fatigue severity. While some items demonstrated narrow distributions (e.g., “I get tired very easily”, $SD = 1.26$), others showed considerable spread (e.g., “Fatigue often causes me problems”, $SD = 5.21$). These discrepancies point to individual differences in fatigue awareness, coping capacity, and potential under-recognition of chronic fatigue as a psychological or occupational hazard.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, subjective evaluations of fatigue can serve as early warning indicators and should be integrated into routine mental health monitoring and peer support systems. Second, the design of fatigue mitigation policies must account not only for physical workload but also for the social and cognitive dimensions of fatigue.

In conclusion, the study highlights the need for personalized support mechanisms, especially in environments where errors due to fatigue may have critical safety consequences. Embedding structured self-report tools within existing aviation psychology frameworks may offer a scalable pathway to improving well-being and reducing operational risks.



Dr. Ismail Gevrek is an Instructor pilot with a PhD philosophy: Environmental and Technical Research of Accidents. He has extensive experience in both civilian and military aviation. Demonstrated expertise in complex flight operations, training skills, fire fighting skills, NVG flight skills, safety protocols and emergency response. He works for the Turkish Gendarmerie Flight Academy and previously at the Turkish Gendarmerie General Command with 3885:00 Hours Total Time on R44, B06, UH1, UH60, MI17.

He has written papers on:

- Evaluation of Flight Equipment in terms of Pilot Fatigue.
- Evaluation of Night Vision Goggles for Indicators Affecting Pilot Fatigue and Flight Safety.
- Analysis of Pilot Distance Estimation in Different Lighting and Visibility Conditions.
- Fuzzy Topsis For Group Decision Making: A Case Study For Night Vision Goggles.
- Investigating the Influence of Factors on the Flight Training Performance of Ab-Initio Pilots.

- Jessica Auslander, MA, PhD

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Jóhann Wium Magnússon

SPEAKER: *The PSP Mental Health Professional – crucial, useful or superfluous extra?*

Many Peer Support Programs (PSPs) will include a dedicated Mental Health Professional (MHP), often be involved in peer selection, peer training, referrals, escalations and more. Some MHP will form a part of a PSPs leadership, while others are little more than hired help with clauses of preferential treatment to those referred from the PSP. While explicitly required for European pilot PSPs, the specific expectations made of them remain somewhat unclear. This presentation would cover information gained from a cooperative EAAP/ESAM working group that looked at the MHP's role according to European and international regulations, results from a stakeholder survey and interview with MHPs who were working with peer support programs. The presentation will also cover the preliminary results from the MHP role and task analysis as well possible accreditation routes within the European arena. Additionally, the presentation will cover some ethical questions about a MHP's role, particularly if the MHP is both in the role of referrer for mental health conditions, and the treatment provider for those same conditions. Finally, the presentation will discuss some potential next steps on developing the MHP role in peer support programs.



Jóhann is an aviation psychologist. He received his BA degree in Psychology from the University of Iceland and an MA degree in Industrial/Organisational Psychology from NYU (New York University). He is also an EAAP (European Association for Aviation Psychology) accredited Aviation Psychologist and a chartered occupational psychologist by the BPS (British Psychological Society).

Jóhann works to enhance awareness and training related to the psychological wellbeing and mental health in aviation. Most recently he worked as the Aviation Psychology Consultant for ICAO. He contributed to the design, development and evaluation of ICAO's aviation psychological and mental health Standards, Recommended Practices and guidance material

Jóhann is on the board of the European Association for Aviation Psychology and sits on the Advisory Board on Aviation Selection, dedicated to developing and publishing

recommended best practices in the selection of pilots, air traffic controllers, air crew and other aviation personnel.

- Ken Morse

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Dr. Kimberly Perkins, First Officer

SPEAKER: *From Individual Burden to System Design: Integrating Emotional Intelligence and AI into Aviation Mental Health Support.*

"This presentation explores how emotionally intelligent artificial intelligence (AI) can be leveraged to enhance psychological wellbeing and resilience in aviation, reframing mental health as a core component of operational safety and risk management rather than a peripheral individual concern. We introduce CRMON, an AI-enhanced platform designed to integrate emotional intelligence (EI) training, Crew Resource Management (CRM), and personalized psychological support into aviation workflows.

Drawing on a multi-phase, mixed-methods study, this research details the design and development of CRMON through four key phases: a thematic analysis of literature in aviation psychology, emotional intelligence, and resilience; a comparative review of AI-enabled mental health interventions; a large-scale survey of over 2,000 pilots and air traffic controllers to assess mental health perceptions and unmet needs; and real-world validation testing with airline pilots and subject matter experts. These steps informed both the theoretical foundation and practical implementation of CRMON as a system-level intervention.

The presentation will guide attendees through each phase of the research and co-design process, illustrating how human factors principles, psychological theory, and AI capabilities were integrated into a scalable, operational tool. Attendees will also have the opportunity to interact with CRMON, exploring its interface, emotionally intelligent prompts, and micro-intervention features aimed at improving self-regulation, stress management, and interpersonal communication in safety-critical environments.

Key findings highlight a persistent paradox in aviation: growing awareness of mental health risks is not matched by engagement with available support systems. Barriers such as stigma, confidentiality concerns, and institutional culture remain significant. In this context, emotionally intelligent AI—particularly in the form of asynchronous chatbot interfaces—emerges as a promising mechanism for delivering confidential, adaptive, and nonjudgmental support.

Attendees will leave with:

- Insight into key barriers that prevent aviation professionals from accessing mental health support, including stigma, cultural norms, and structural limitations.
- Evidence of the feasibility and acceptability of AI-based emotional support tools in high-reliability aviation environments.
- A systems-level framework for integrating mental health and EI into existing CRM and safety training.
- Hands-on interaction with CRMON, offering a firsthand look at its emotionally intelligent prompts, scenario-based learning tools, and anonymized feedback features.
- A discussion of the ethical, regulatory, and practical considerations for implementing emotionally intelligent AI in aviation workflows.
- A reconceptualization of mental readiness as a trainable, observable, and coachable skill aligned with international pilot competency frameworks.

Ultimately, this presentation advocates for a paradigm shift: from reactive, compliance-driven mental health strategies to proactive, human-centred systems that align wellbeing with operational performance. Attendees will gain insights into how emerging technologies like CRMON can act as bridges between passive awareness and meaningful action—creating both a

buffer against emotional strain and a roadmap for cultural and structural change in aviation safety systems.



Kimberly Perkins, PhD, is a Research Scientist in the Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington and an airline pilot. Her research focuses on advancing mental health and psychological resilience in safety-critical professions through the integration of emotional intelligence, human-centered system design, and applied behavioral science.

With an interdisciplinary doctorate from the University of Washington, Kimberly's work explores how psychological safety, emotional intelligence, and proactive mental health interventions can be systematically embedded into high-reliability operations to enhance safety, decision-making, and team dynamics. Her recent studies examine the role of AI-enabled micro-interventions in reducing psychosocial risk and promoting mental readiness among aviation professionals.

Kimberly brings over two decades of experience in both business and commercial aviation, previously serving as a captain on the Gulfstream 650 and currently flying the Boeing 787 for a major U.S.-based airline. In addition to her academic and operational work, Kimberly serves on the Human Performance Excellence Council at CAE and is a board member of Rise Up and Read, a nonprofit dedicated to early literacy and mental wellbeing for displaced and refugee children. She is also an Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne and a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

- Laila Stein

SPEAKER: *Mental Health Program Challenges and Solutions for Business Aviation.*

The National Business Aviation Association represents over 10,000 members across the expansive landscape of business aviation representative of one airplane and three pilots departments to the largest fractional ownership companies. From pilots, mechanics, and flight attendants to tax professionals, airport operators, FBO managers, schedulers, and dispatchers the personnel are incredibly diverse. Mental health challenges are just as prevalent within business aviation as they are everywhere else in our industry, but the solutions are not. This presentation will aim to ask: How do we encompass mental health programs not just for one or two roles, but for an entire flight department? How do we ensure that everyone who helps a flight get off the ground has the resources they need? Can we craft a solution as dynamic and unique as the many facets of business aviation?

- Attendees will learn about organizational differences between common business aviation operations and scheduled airline operators, relative to mental health programs.
- Attendees will learn about possible ways that business aviation organizations could viably implement mental health programs to support mental wellness among their employees.



Laila Stein is a Flight Operations Specialist for the National Business Aviation Association where she has a focus on training, Part 91, Part 135, and small flight department issues through her role as the staff liaison for the Domestic Operations Committee. Additionally, she helps represent business aviation on industry mental health committees, boards, and organizations. In her role, Laila aims to help share the perspective of young aviation professionals with stakeholders and communicate significant and relevant changes to affected populations.

She entered the world of aviation mental health with the publication of her undergraduate thesis titled “Mental Health in Aviation: A Study of Aviation Students on Their Perceptions of the Federal Aviation Administration’s Rules Governing Mental Health”. Laila is also the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the Pilot Mental Health Campaign and a commercial-rated pilot and aircraft flight instructor with a bachelor’s degree from Western Michigan University.

- Lydia Schock

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Marija Savikj

SPEAKER: *ATCO Healthcare Avoidance Among Air Traffic Controllers: A Safety and Wellbeing Challenge.*

Air traffic controllers (ATCOs), the same as the pilots, are subject to strict medical requirements, with any health condition or treatment potentially affecting their ability to work. According to a 2022 study (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35166258/>) done by the University of Washington, pilots avoid seeking healthcare and sometimes are disclosing health issues due to fear of losing their medical certificates. Such behavior is considered a potential safety issue, but it can have a further impact on mental health and well-being as well.

IFATCA wanted to explore the behavior of air traffic controllers to better understand their culture of reporting health issues and to address concerns about the overall safety of air traffic control. The International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers’ Associations (IFATCA) Wellbeing Task Force collaborated once more with Dr. Billy Hoffman and the University of Washington to conduct a global, anonymous survey investigating healthcare avoidance behaviors among air traffic controllers (ATCOs) following this study.

We expect that the findings will provide recommendations for regulators and industry stakeholders, providing a supportive framework that will prioritize both safety and the mental health of the controllers.

This presentation will point out the reasons behind the study, explain the research methods used, and present initial findings. It will emphasize why systemic changes are urgently needed to help air traffic controllers protect their health without compromising their job and their professional responsibilities. In addition, the presentation will address how a supportive reporting culture is essential for maintaining overall safety in the industry, which means that IFATCA wants controllers to feel safe to report health or safety concerns without fear of negative consequences, thereby strengthening the safety management system as a whole.



Savikj is an experienced air traffic controller who has worked for over 20 years at the Skopje International Airport in Macedonia. She holds degrees in mathematics and software engineering but never got to use her talents as a math professor, opting for another career path instead.

When her company introduced Critical Incident Stress Management, Marija took on the role of CISM coordinator for her team.

In July 2024, she joined IFATCA’s Mental Wellbeing Task Force, where she leads the fourth stream focused on raising awareness and promoting mental wellbeing. Her objective is

to help her colleagues understand the importance of prioritizing well-being in their high-pressure profession.

- Mark Berg M.A. LPC-S, CEAP, SAP, ACC, CCISM

SPEAKER: *Peer Support in AviationWorld Class Support for Overall Health and Wellness*

This presentation was provided at the 2025 World Congress for ICISF.

Critical Incident Response in aviation is challenging today. With the global operations of many carriers, passenger and cargo carriers, providing support to pilots is challenging. I will address the challenges and benefits of some of the different support areas in dealing with pilots and their US FAA regulations that impact the challenges of seeking assistance with mental health professionals that attempt to work with these pilots. We will address the challenges of getting pilots to seek mental health support due to these challenges. I will compare and contract Peer Support between First Responders and Pilots.

In addition, I will look at the challenges that are faced in providing support when dealing with cultural, gender, rank, and seniority issues for crews involved in a critical or traumatic event. With pilots from around the world, understanding and respecting these differences plays a big role in training peers to support fellow pilots in multiple aspects and challenges.

We will discuss some of the most challenging incidents pilots face in today's world so we can learn from each other. This will be an interactive presentation.

- Address benefits & challenges with Peer Support
- Address challenges getting pilots to medical & mental health professionals
- Address cultural, gender, age, rank,& Seniority challenges
- Address challenging incidents
- Address questions from attendees.....



His educational background includes a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy and a Bachelor of Science in Sociology/Psychology, both from the University of Houston Clear Lake.

Berg's clinical experience spans roles such as Executive Leadership Coach in private practice, National Clinical Director for the Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) with the Air Line Pilot Association (ALPA), and Director of EAP at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center and ExpressJet Airlines. He has provided individual, family, and couples therapy, critical incident stress management, and leadership coaching.

He has also been involved in significant research activities, including a grant with the University of Texas System Police on peer support for law enforcement officers, studies on the effects of long-term shift work, and intervention projects with battered women and children.

Berg is actively involved in professional associations, serving on the Board of Directors for the International Employee Assistance Professionals Association and as National Clinical Director for ALPA's CIRP Team. He has delivered numerous national presentations on topics such as CISM support for pilots, peer support in aviation, burnout and resiliency, and threat assessment. His local community service includes stress management presentations, parenting classes, and critical incident stress management training. He has coordinated critical incident responses and disaster drills for various companies and organizations.

- Markus Holowenko

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Captains Masa Miyata and Max Matsumoto

SPEAKERS: *Adaptation and sustainable operation of Peer Support Program in Asia*

Ever since hosting the IPAAC conference in Osaka last fall, not only in the rest of Japan but other organizations in the Asian region are striving, yet following to set up their own program. We've overcome difficulties adapting to our culture by the full support from our successors in Europe and U.S.A., and of course from Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong. We believe teamwork contributes to great outcomes. However, there are still white spots in the region where we need to fill. It's not only to support the local crew, but to support foreign stranded crew on layovers. We understand some countries have no pilot organization, and may not be aware of the program at all.

At our presentation, we would like to share the adaptation process and share some good practices of maintaining confidentiality, and yet a transparent system. Additionally, to share some ideas of having a regional meeting with the full support of IPAAC. By using the network of IFALPA and IFATCA, I believe IPAAC can reach out to the white spots and support to set up the program.

The participants can learn the effectiveness of the Japanese "Peer Salon". Also, understand the difference from Western culture perspectives.



Max is currently Boeing 787 captain flying for ANA based in Tokyo, Japan. With more than 10000 flight hours, Max has flown B767 and B777 previously. He is currently a Peer Support Coordinator for APSP (ANA Peer Support Program).

He is Safety Manager at the Corporate Safety Division of ANA and a member of the FSAG (Fatigue Safety Action Group) and risk management evaluator for ANA. As an external role, he belongs to IATA Safety Group.



CA Masayuki Miyata is currently a B787 captain and Vice President of Safety Promotion Department of Corporate Safety and Security of Japan Airlines. After checking out as a co-pilot on a 747-400, he worked as an instructor for Ab Initio and became a captain on the same type of aircraft in 2003. He then worked in the Training Department developing MPL license in Japan, experienced the Safety Promotion Department at Flight Ops. And started his work at Corporate Safety in September of this year.

- Dr Paul Farnan

SPEAKER: *Problematic Substance Use; Strengths-Based, Recovery-Oriented Approaches for Peer Support in Aviation Workplaces.*

In the aviation industry—where safety, precision, and performance are paramount—addressing mental health and addiction challenges has traditionally centered on identification, compliance with treatment and follow-up, and symptom management. While this approach reflects concern and care, it often neglects the long-term, strengths-based framework needed for true recovery. This presentation introduces a recovery-oriented model grounded in recovery science, emphasizing the vital role of peer support and the untapped potential of aviation workplaces to serve as sources of recovery capital. With increasing difficulty accessing clinicians who both understand addiction and the unique occupational stressors of aviation—such as irregular schedules, isolation, fatigue, and safety-critical responsibilities—organizations must move beyond referral models and invest in cultivating recovery-inclusive environments. Participants will explore the often-misunderstood concept of recovery. In addition, an examination of how fostering recovery capital and embedding peer-led support in workplace culture not only improves

employee well-being but directly contributes to aviation safety, reliability, and operational resilience.

- Define addiction and recovery, as understood by individuals in recovery, and contrast it with traditional, compliance-focused or abstinence-only approaches commonly used in safety-sensitive industries.
- Differentiate between deficit-based addiction management models and strengths-based recovery strategies that emphasize resilience, holistic wellness, and sustainable functioning in high-stakes operational roles.
- Describe the role of recovery capital—especially occupational and social capital—and how aviation organizations can build and sustain these assets to support recovery within a safety-critical culture.
- Recognize the critical role of peer support workers in aviation, and how they can bridge the gap when access to specialized addiction care is limited, while reducing stigma and improving early intervention.
- Demonstrate how a recovery-informed workplace culture enhances aviation safety, by supporting fitness for duty, reducing presenteeism and risk, and strengthening psychological safety, trust, and retention in the aviation workforce.



Dr. Paul Farnan's expertise is highly relevant to the aviation industry, primarily through his focus on safety-sensitive and safety-critical work environments, which inherently includes pilots, air traffic controllers, and maintenance personnel.

His specific contributions and experience related to aviation include:

- **Independent Medical Evaluations (IMEs):** Dr. Farnan has extensive experience providing IMEs specifically for the aviation industry. These evaluations are critical for assessing an individual's fitness for duty, especially when issues like substance use disorders (SUDs), recovery, or other medical conditions could impact safety.
- **Safety-Critical Focus:** His entire practice centers on the interface of occupational and addiction medicine within safety-sensitive settings. For aviation, this means evaluating risk and ensuring that individuals in roles that could endanger the public are medically cleared and supported in their recovery, adhering to strict regulatory standards.
- **Policy Development:** Dr. Farnan has advanced knowledge in developing organizational policies addressing substance use in the workplace. This includes consulting with employers and organizations on creating a Recovery Informed Workplace, which is crucial for managing the medical and employment status of aviation professionals dealing with addiction.
- Dr. Farnan's experience is to apply his specialized knowledge in addiction and occupational health to help the aviation industry maintain the highest safety standards by medically assessing and managing personnel.

- Peter Whitten.

SPEAKER: *One Framework, Many Cultures: Challenges and Opportunities in Integrated Peer Support for Aviation Professionals*

Peer support interventions are increasingly recognised as a critical element of mental health and wellbeing strategies within aviation. Historically, such programmes have been developed along role-specific lines, with pilots, engineers, cabin crew, and air traffic controllers typically operating separate systems. The Talk to a Peer (TTAP) programme provides a unique case study, as it integrates peer support for pilots, cabin crew, and engineers within a single framework.

This presentation will critically examine the implications of delivering a multi-disciplinary peer support model, highlighting both the opportunities and the challenges inherent in this approach. Drawing on operational experience and data, the discussion will consider the extent to which core

peer support principles can be applied consistently across diverse professional groups, and where adaptation is necessary to address differing cultural, operational, and psychosocial dynamics.

Key themes will include the management of confidentiality within mixed-role frameworks; the impact of professional identity on help-seeking behaviours; and the complexities involved in training, supervising, and sustaining a peer support cohort drawn from distinct occupational communities. The presentation will also explore the tensions between standardisation and customisation in peer support design, particularly in balancing the need for a coherent programme identity with the specific needs of individual professional groups.

While positive outcomes have been observed, including strengthened cross-disciplinary networks and enhanced opportunities for early intervention, significant challenges remain. These include inconsistent engagement patterns, divergent expectations regarding the scope of peer support, and the risks associated with cultural misunderstandings across professional boundaries.

The aim of this presentation is not to advocate for a universal model, but rather to contribute a reflective analysis of practice to the wider discourse on peer support in safety-critical industries. By offering a balanced account of both effective strategies and persistent difficulties, it is hoped that these insights will inform the development of robust, adaptable, and context-sensitive peer support frameworks across the aviation sector and beyond.

- Analyse the practical and cultural challenges of implementing a multi-role peer support programme within the aviation sector.
- Evaluate the benefits and limitations of integrating diverse professional groups under a unified peer support framework.



Peter is the Sales Director at OdiliaClark, a leading provider of Impairment Risk Management services for safety-critical industries. In addition to his role at OdiliaClark, Peter is an active pilot, currently flying the Boeing 787 for a major UK airline. His flying career includes serving as a Captain on the C-17 Globemaster and as an instructor on the King Air B200 for the UK Royal Air Force, as well as corporate flying on the King Air. He chairs the UK CAAs FOLG Sub-Group on Health and Wellbeing.

In 2017, following a personal loss, Peter co-founded the & “Talk To A Peer” Peer Support Programme alongside his colleagues.

- Priya Doobaree

(See PANELS)

- Dr. Quay Snyder MD, MSPH

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Dr. Robert Zeglin PhD, MPA, NCC, CST, CFI-I

SPEAKER: *Creating a Culture of Wellness in Aviation.*

Aviation professionals are trained to manage risk with discipline, precision, and calm under pressure. Yet when it comes to their own health and well-being, many feel forced to choose silence over honesty. In a national survey of 3,765 pilots, 56.1% reported avoiding health care at least once due to concerns about losing their FAA medical certification. Nearly 27% admitted to withholding or misrepresenting information on legally binding aeromedical forms. This hesitancy does not stem from recklessness, it is emblematic of a culture in which disclosure is perceived as dangerous, a risk to one's livelihood and identity. As long as that fear persists, even the most progressive policy reforms will fall short.

This presentation explores how to build a culture of wellness in aviation that moves beyond policy, toward something more human. At the heart of that shift is the belief that wellness cannot thrive in isolation. Efforts to improve safety must come not only from regulation, but from culture, communication, and community. A multifaceted approach is needed, one that addresses institutional norms while empowering individuals to seek care early, speak honestly, and support one another.

Clear Skies Ahead, a nonprofit organization dedicated to this mission, is working to bridge that gap through education, storytelling, and outreach. The initiative combines evidence-based advocacy with emotionally resonant tools: webinars that offer practical guidance for early intervention, trend data that illustrate health behaviors and barriers, and short-form autobiographical videos that help pilots in “Getting Out of Fear and Into Action.” These personal stories of struggle, care-seeking, and recovery serve as powerful counter-narratives to the silence that currently defines the aviation landscape. When someone hears a story that reflects their own fear, and sees that the outcome was not disaster but healing, they are more likely to act.

But storytelling alone is not enough. A cultural shift requires coordinated effort across systems. Peer support groups such as “Fellow Travelers” and “Birds of a Feather” play a vital role, offering safe spaces for connection and shared understanding. However, they cannot and should not replace formal professional mental health services. A truly effective culture of wellness must be grounded in Just Culture principles, where professionals are trusted to make good decisions, and where disclosure is met with clarity, compassion, and support.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain why fostering and sustaining a culture of wellness in aviation requires a coordinated, multifaceted approach involving multiple organizations and strategies.
- Recognize the role of shared personal experiences in motivating behavioral change and reducing stigma within aviation communities.



Dr. Robert Zeglin is a licensed mental health clinician, certified flight instructor (CFI-I), and nonprofit leader. Drawing on his background in clinical practice, policy advocacy, and aviation training, he works to close the gap between mental health care and the unique needs of the aviation community. His work focuses on education, research, and cultural transformation, empowering aviators to seek help without fear and advancing a more human-centered approach to safety and regulation across the industry.

Clear Skies Ahead was created with the mission to improve aviation professionals' health and the safety of the national airspace system through research, education, and support. CSA works to cultivate a culture of wellness within the aviation community. Through education, we empower professionals to address symptoms and seek necessary care.

- Professor Robert Bor

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Riley Madsen

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Dr. Sandra "Salty" Salzman, LtCol, MC, USAF

SPEAKER: Military Aviator Peer Support at Ramstein Air Base: a confidentiality-based “Wingman” model to enhance resilience and readiness

In military aviation culture, pilots often avoid seeking behavioral health care due to fear of career impact or loss of flying status. At Ramstein AB, wait times for behavioral health intake average 3–

4 weeks, saved for pathology requiring treatment, leaving a gap in early support. In November 2024, we launched the Military Aviator Peer Support (MAPS) program as a feasibility study to provide a confidential peer network for Ramstein aircrew and support staff. Thirty-two volunteer peers underwent military specific training in active listening, confidentiality, and escalation protocols, drawing on civilian aviation peer support best practices. Airmen access peers via a menu in the Electronic Flight Bag; peers respond within 36 hours, without recording it medical or personnel files unless mandated by risk protocols. Over the first eleven months, MAPS recorded 91 contacts; 62.1% (n = 41) were classified in the “Reacting” stress stage, and no red-flag cases (e.g. suicidality or mission failure risk) occurred. Early leadership endorsement and command visibility were critical enablers. MAPS offers a culturally aligned, nonclinical channel for aviators to seek help through trusted colleagues, strengthening connectedness and early triage. As the program nears its one-year mark, we will share refined utilization metrics, lessons learned, safety record, and considerations for scale across the Air Force.



Lt. Colonel Sandra M. Salzman is a distinguished Pilot-Physician currently undertaking a Residency of Aerospace Medicine at Wright Patterson AFB. She is a recognized subject matter expert in aerospace medicine and human performance, advising on aviation safety and human factors optimization for operational missions.

Her career began in 2001 as an Aerospace Propulsion Technician in the Wisconsin Air National Guard. In 2004, she was commissioned as a C130H pilot in the 133rd Airlift Wing. After serving as the A5/8 in the Virginia Air National Guard, she earned her Medical Degree from the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences in 2017.

Lt. Colonel Salzman serves as the 435th Air Expeditionary Wing Chief of Aerospace Air Forces Africa at Ramstein Air Base. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as Chief of Aerospace Medicine at Malmstrom Air Force Base, she spearheaded data-driven healthcare initiatives that led to permanent policy updates across Air Force Global Strike Command.

She served as a C130J pilot and physician, specializing in aerospace medicine and human performance. She developed and tested Military Aviator Peer Support programs and advised on health-related mitigation strategies.

She contributed to an inter-disciplinary team that revised Air Force mental health medical standards. She continues to innovate squadron, group, and Air Force-wide solutions to operational challenges through scientific data and dedication. Recently, Lt. Colonel Salzman's concluded 10-year research on pregnancy in military aviation led to significant changes in Air Force Pregnancy policy and professional military education, impacting over 1,000 airmen annually.

Her extensive education includes a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin, a Medical Degree from the Uniformed Services University, and ongoing pursuit of a Master's in Public Health from Purdue. She has received numerous accolades, including the Howard R. Unger Award for best published work in Air Force Aerospace Medicine and recognition from the Chief of Staff of Air Force for her efforts in Aviator Mental Health and Pregnancy. She has over 1,300 flight hours in various aircraft.

- Sky Overbo, PhD

(See WORKSHOPS)

- Dr. Surendra Sodhi

SPEAKER: *Proposed Format For Mental Health Assessment Of Aviation Personnel..*

The Aero Medical Examiner has an unique opportunity to assess the mental health status of Aircrew/ Cabin crew and Air Traffic controller during their license medical examination. But he lacks the expertise to conduct such an assessment. A format is proposed for conducting a brief but proficient assessment of the aviation personnel. It is based on available assessment questionnaires, which have established clinical validity and approved by several aviation authorities. The format has been designed to assess the common mental health issues encountered in aviation industry, like Mood disorders, Stress/Anxiety and Alcohol abuse. It does not assess cognitive functions like Cog Screen or ADAPT. A comparison between the proposed model and other two tests mentioned above will be discussed.

The Learning objective of this presentation would be to make AMEs aware that a quick and inexpensive assessment technique to screen for common mental health issues is available and they should use it routinely for screening during license medical examination.

The second would be to explain when this model should be used and when cognitive functions assessment models are needed. Then aviation authorities may resort to additional tests which are time consuming and expensive.



Dr. Surendra Sodhi is an Aviation Medicine & Internal Medicine Specialist with over 40 years of experience. He has extensive experience in both clinical and regulatory aspects of Aviation Medicine and has taught the subject for over 25 years.

His professional highlights include roles such as Chief Adviser AeroMedical Services at MD ONBOARD, NORTHWELL HEALTH Services, USA, Chief Medical Officer at Etihad Airways, Medical Advisor to the Director General of Civil Aviation, India, and President of the Medical Evaluation Centre at the Institute of Aerospace Medicine. He is also a Senior Aeromedical Examiner (AME) for various civil aviation authorities and was the first AME in India for Virgin Galactic Space Travel passengers.

Dr. Sodhi's expertise includes being a qualified instructor in Crew Resource Management, Bloodborne Pathogens, Aeromedical modules for flight crew, Fatigue Risk Management, and MRO-Drug and Alcohol Implementation. He has experience working with pilot unions, implementing corporate alcohol and drug policies, and developing Safety Management Systems (Human Factors) in airlines.

His professional experience spans roles from Chief Aero Medical Adviser at MD ONBOARD (June 2024 - Present) to serving in the Indian Air Force (1974-2000), where he held positions such as Medical Advisor to the Director General of Civil Aviation and Associate Professor of Aviation Medicine. He has also held Chief Aeromedical Consultant roles at Nahar Medical Centre and Civil Aero Medical Centre in Mumbai, and was Chief Medical Officer at Etihad Airways from 2001-2014, where he established a state-of-the-art medical center and implemented various aeromedical programs.

Dr. Sodhi holds an M.D. in Internal Medicine (1983), a Diploma in Aviation Medicine (1977), and an M.B.B.S (1974), all from AFMC, Pune, and IAM, Bangalore. He has numerous recent presentations on topics such as mental health among pilots, drug testing in aviation, human factors in safety management, and aeromedical considerations. He is affiliated with several professional organizations, including the Aerospace Medicine Association, the Airline Medical Directors Association, and the Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine.

- Tony Lepore

SPEAKER: *Peer Supporter roles in the worst-case scenario.*

Real Time on what peer support goes through on a daily basis.

See what Tech ops does in a time of an aged workforce and Deaths.



I'm Tony I have been working in Aviation for 39 years as an aircraft technician. I have always had a passion for helping people and the greatest reward to date is taking care of my 85 year old father. I started my peer support journey 15 years ago, my function in this roll has changed throughout the years expanding my EAP responsibilities to Benefits, Professional Standards and Bereavement. I believe our bodies are made to be rivers not reservoirs, the importance of having an outlet for our members and our peer support team.

- Dr. William R Hoffman MD

SPEAKER: *An Operationally Focused Qualitative Review of Emerging Literature in Peer Support.*

As aviation organizations increasingly acknowledge the critical importance of mental health in sustaining safety and operational performance, peer support programs (PSPs) have become a globally adopted strategy to provide confidential, early-access mental health support. These programs enable pilots and other safety-sensitive personnel to seek help from trained peers, often before clinical involvement or regulatory consequences, and have become a cornerstone of modern aviation mental health strategy.

This presentation offers a qualitative review of key literature on aviation peer support and mental health published since the last International Peer Assist Aviation Collaboration (IPAAC) meeting. The review synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed articles and consensus statements to provide an up-to-date understanding of PSPs, including their alignment with Safety Management Systems (SMS) and best practices in implementation.

Included in the review are recent publications detailing prevalence rates of mental health conditions among aviation professionals (such as depression, anxiety, and healthcare avoidance) with a global view and the predicted benefits of peer support. A focal point of the presentation will be one key publication that synthesizes recommendations for ethical practices related to data collection in peer support programs based on a multidisciplinary panel of experts in aviation peer support, medical research, and aerospace medicine. Limitations of existing data will be discussed.

The presentation aims to equip peer support program administrators, aviation medical professionals, operational leaders, and researchers with a practical synthesis of current evidence, while also identifying research priorities to guide future efforts. The session will conclude with time for discussion, encouraging collaboration among mental health practitioners, safety managers, and aviation decision-makers.

- The participant will summarize key findings from recent aviation mental health literature, including prevalence rates of psychological conditions and the predicted benefits of peer support programs.
- The participant will summarize ethical principles and recommended practices for data collection in aviation peer support programs.”



William Hoffman, M.D., is a Medical Director and Staff Neurologist with a strong background in aerospace medicine and a focus on pilot mental health. He holds various academic appointments, including Assistant Professor of Neurology at Uniformed Services University and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of North Dakota.

His extensive education includes an M.D. from Georgetown University, a fellowship in Movement Disorders and Neuromodulation from Columbia University, and post-doctoral training in Aeromedical Research with the Federal Aviation Administration. He is board-certified in Neurology and holds medical licenses in New York and Virginia, as well as an Aeromedical Examiner certification.

Dr. Hoffman has held significant professional positions, such as Lead of the Warfighter Brain Health Team for the U.S. Air Force and Chief Resident of Neurology at Brooke Army Medical Center. He has secured substantial research funding, totaling over \$700,000, for studies related to pilot health and healthcare-seeking behavior.

His publication record includes numerous peer-reviewed articles, government publications, international organizational consensus statements, and media publications, many of which address pilot mental health and aviation safety. He is also the author of two published books.

Dr. Hoffman is an active participant in professional organizations, including the Aerospace Medical Association, where he serves as Vice Chair of the Aviation Mental Health Working Group and Co-Chair of the Research Working Subgroup. He has given numerous international and national presentations on aviation mental health and related topics, and has been featured in various media outlets discussing pilot mental health issues. His contributions have been recognized with awards such as the Boothby-Edwards Award for outstanding research in aviation health and the Maj John Barry Resident Physician of the Year Award.

- **Wendy Santilhano**

(See WORKSHOPS)

- **Zoe Thompson**

(See WORKSHOPS)

WORKSHOPS:

- From Barriers to Bridges: Exploring the role of culture in Peer Support

PRESENTERS:

- Robert Bor,
- Umainah Abdul Aziz,
- Wendy Santilhano

This interactive workshop considers the growing need for cultural awareness and intercultural competence within aviation peer support programs. As airlines and aviation workplaces become increasingly diverse, peer teams must consider how cultural differences influence trust-building, perceptions of mental health, and expressions of distress. The workshop challenges participants to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and explore the skills required to support colleagues respectfully and effectively across cultural boundaries.

Drawing from lessons presented at the IPAAC 2024 Diversity in Aviation workshop, this session goes beyond surface-level awareness. During this interactive workshop participants will discuss:

- how culture can act as either an invisible barrier or a bridge in peer conversations.
- explore how their own cultural norms and values impact the support they offer and the 'lenses' they bring into each peer interaction.
- examine how cultural attitudes toward mental health may be expressed differently across communities, and
- what tools or strategies are needed to navigate these differences with care.

Rather than relying solely on possible demographic matching, the workshop will challenge participants to consider whether an attentive, compassionate, and culturally sensitive peer might be more effective in certain contexts. Participants will also discuss what happens when cultural missteps occur, and how these moments can be opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. Ultimately, the workshop equips participants to build trust across cultural lines, to better understand culturally influenced expressions of distress, and to develop the competencies needed for effective, inclusive, and respectful peer support in today's global aviation environment.

- Build awareness of how cultural identity, assumptions, and values impact peer support interactions in aviation.
- Develop practical strategies and intercultural competencies to navigate culturally diverse peer discussions with sensitivity and effectiveness.

BIOGRAPHIES:



Professor Robert Bor is Director of the Centre for Aviation Psychology. He is a registered and practicing Clinical, Counselling and Health Psychologist in the UK, and also a certified Aviation Psychologist in Europe. Rob is a Board Member of the European Association for Aviation Psychology, Civilian Psychologist to the Royal Air Force, on the ICAO Mental Health Working Group, Aerospace Medical Association Mental Health Group and European Pilot Peer Support Initiative Committee.

Until 2023, he was the Lead Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the Royal Free Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London, working in acute and critical care, with a special interest in safety in high-risk work settings. He has published more than 35 textbooks and 250 academic papers and chapters in books, including 4 key textbooks in aviation psychology: The Handbook of

Aviation Neuropsychology, Aviation Mental Health, Pilot Mental Health Assessment and Support and Pilot Selection.

He received the highest award in aviation in 2017, an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and is listed on the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Wall of Honor in Washington D.C. He is a Liveryman of the Honorary Company of Air Pilots and holds the Freedom of the City of London. Rob is a Churchill Fellow (presented by H. M. The Queen) and together with the AsMA mental health group has recently received the Boothby-Edwards award from the Aerospace Medical Association.



Wendy Santilhano is passionate about psychosocial safety in the workplace, peer support systems, and coaching and mentoring aviation leaders. Raised in South Africa's multicultural environment, she began her career providing non-academic support to students disadvantaged by Apartheid-era education.

After transitioning into aviation, her experience as an airline pilot, combined with her commitment to supporting others, led her to explore how the aviation system can better help pilots maintain wellbeing while sustaining peak performance. This inquiry led to the founding of South Africa's first peer support programme for pilots, research into the transformative role of peer support, and ongoing contributions to international aviation wellbeing initiatives.

Wendy holds graduate degrees in Intercultural Management and Leadership Coaching, and works with pilots and aviation leaders navigating complex challenges. She is deeply committed to fostering emotionally safer environments that enable high performance—through peer support, cross-cultural insight, and collaborative leadership.

- Navigating the emotional labour of being a peer: A peer community-led approach

PRESENTER: Hanna Kerr, First Officer BA

"What if peers need help?

Given the emotional labour inherent in the role, how often do peers ask each other if they are okay, deeper than a surface level enquiry?

How often do peers not know what someone else is dealing with in their training rooms?

Do peers ever take help from other peers?

Peers have 3 identities in this role, two that are acknowledged; 1) they are peers, 2) they are peers who support colleagues; and one identity that is rarely, explicitly acknowledged 3) that they are peers who have their own lives, their own issues, and who are not immune to needing peer support too.

Perhaps peers are not admitting that they need support, be it personal or case load, as their role is to support others. How can a peer admit they're having troubles when sometimes what they are listening to is much worse than anything in their lives? Reluctance to admit vulnerability as a community could be leading to lower mental resilience, peer burnout and good peers leaving support programmes.

The speaker will discuss peer experiences of needing help and share their own experience with an (anonymised) emotionally demanding case. They will give a first hand account of how they needed support but didn't take enough as they were new, nervous and worried about it being a poor reflection on them being a peer. They didn't know to lean on the peer community and didn't want to be a burden about a problem that wasn't their own.

These experiences brought about a discussion within Speedbird PAN about the need for more community support and care for one another. The group introduced 'triads' that meet regularly and which have transformed the overall group dynamics. These include deeper conversations, sharing the emotional intensity of cases and not shouldering the burden of heavy cases alone, taking away the stigma of burdening colleagues and admitting that peers themselves need support from their peers. It has been a big step forward for the group which will be shared with the wider peer community at IPAAC.

The workshop is intended for peers exclusively where they will have the chance to participate in the communal power and connection of shared experience. Peers will discuss their definition of 'heavy cases', the impact that it has on them, and strategies they use to protect themselves from the emotional toil from these cases. This workshop will be interactive and all case discussion anonymised. The session will finish with an introduction to 'breath-work' (optional). This technique of focussed breathing can become an important tool for peers in self care and managing the heavy energy/emotions around demanding cases.

Peers will take away the following:

- There needs to be systemic implementation to take care of peers to prevent peer burnout
- Community is a vital part of peer support that needs to be encouraged and embedded
- Collective appreciation that some cases do take a big toll and there is no shame/burden for seeking support.

BIOGRAPHY: (See Hana's Bio under SPEAKERS)

- Overcoming the barriers which prevent aviation personnel seeking PSP help.

PRESENTERS:

- Herwin Bongers,
- Kahea Ching,
- Andrew LeBovidge,
- Dr Kimberly Perkins,
- Annie Indzeoski,
- Dave Fielding

A recent global survey of over 1600 aviation professionals from Europe, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand has shed light on the current state of mental health in the industry. The findings reveal that mental health is widely acknowledged as a pressing issue, with 69% of respondents identifying it as a significant or major concern. In contrast, only 2% considered it not to be a concern at all.

Despite this widespread recognition, the majority of aviation professionals—66%—reported actively avoiding the use of mental health resources or support tools. The most common reason for this avoidance is fear that seeking help could negatively impact their job security or career progression. This indicates a pervasive culture of stigma and perceived professional risk surrounding mental health disclosures in aviation.

Peer support programs, which are designed to provide confidential and accessible assistance, are available in many organisations. However, 63% of respondents said they had never used such services. Among the main reasons for this were concerns about confidentiality (44%) and discomfort discussing personal mental health issues with peer supporters (37%). Interestingly, 26% of respondents were unaware that such programs existed, suggesting that the issue is not one of access or visibility, but of trust and comfort with the current systems.

The survey results highlight a critical disconnect: aviation professionals are both aware of and concerned about mental health, yet they are reluctant to engage with the support structures in place. This suggests that improving the perceived safety, confidentiality, and culture around mental health support is essential. Without addressing these trust barriers, the gap between mental health needs and effective help-seeking is likely to persist, undermining both individual wellbeing and overall industry safety.

The geographical breakdown of respondents was:

N. America 32%, S. America 5%, Asia 9%, Africa 12%, Australia/New Zealand 13%, Europe 29%

This workshop will explore the types of strategies and/or programmes that have demonstrably overcome barriers to aviation personnel wishing to seek help from PSPs.

1. Participants will be exposed to current trends for healthcare avoidance.
2. Participants will be exposed to current trends for PSP avoidance.
3. Participants will workshop to identify barriers associated with these avoidance behaviours specific to:
 - Air Traffic controllers
 - Cabin crew
 - Ground technical crew.
 - Pilots
4. Participants will workshop to identify exemplars of programmes, tools, interventions or strategies which demonstrably overcome the identified avoidance behaviours.
5. Participants will categorise and rank scalable versions of these exemplar programmes for publication to external PSPs.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Dr Kimberly Perkins, (See Kimberly's Bio under SPEAKERS)

Kahea Ching is a Hawaiian Airlines Flight Attendant for 29 years. She is the LEC Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Chair Council 43 (2015-2023) as well as Hawaiian Airlines Master Executive Council (MEC) EAP Chair (2023-present). She sits on both the FADAP Advisory Board and IPAAC Advisory Board.

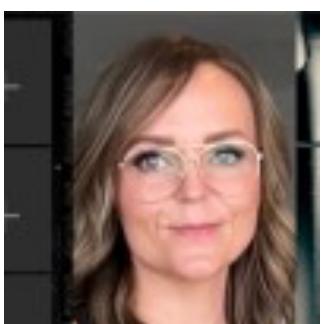


Andrew LeBovidge, currently serves as the IFATCA Executive Vice President Americas Region and sits on IFATCA's Mental Wellbeing Committee. Mr. LeBovidge recently retired after 33 years as an air traffic controller in the United States and is the former Executive Vice President for the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), United States.



Mr. LeBovidge started his air traffic control career at Houston Air Route Traffic Control Center in 1992 and served as a representative for NATCA since 1998. He served as the Chief Negotiator for the 2024 collective agreement for NATCA's non-ATCO bargaining units, the National Academies of Science Committee for Study of Federal Aviation Administration Air Traffic Controller Staffing, the FAA Independent Review Panel on the Selection, Assignment and Training of Air Traffic Control Specialists, and on a number of other collaborative workgroups with the FAA, including the FAA-NATCA Drug and Alcohol Committee.

He was appointed to the Federal Aviation Administration's Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee in October 2022 and also served on the FAA's Mental Health and Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC). He is currently serves on behalf of IFATCA on the Executive Board of the International Peer Aviation Assist Committee (IPAAC) advocating for peer support programs for aviation safety professional and also participates in the current work to implement the recommendations from the FAA Mental Health ARC.



Annie Indzeoski, Annie has dedicated nearly 24 years to WestJet's Technical Operations, where she has held diverse roles, including Maintenance Programs for the 787 fleet and Component Repair and Overhaul. In her current role as a Safety Compliance Officer, Annie specializes in Occupational Health and Safety, blending technical expertise with a commitment to workplace safety. She holds an aircraft mechanics diploma and is an ISO-certified auditor.

Annie joined WestJet's TechOps Peer Support team in 2018, becoming chair in 2019, where she continues to lead initiatives that prioritize team well-being and resilience.



Dave Fielding, studied Classics at Cambridge before making the perfectly logical step and becoming an airline pilot. He joined British Airways in 1993 on the Highlands and Islands Division, flying the BAe ATP. When Highlands Division closed he moved down to London on the B757 and achieved his command on the Airbus A320 in 2001. Since then he has been a captain on the B757, B767, B777, A350 and the A380, which is his current type.

Dave has been a union rep since 1996, specialising in disciplinaries which led to an interest in alcohol and welfare cases and developing support programmes. Post Germanwings, he worked closely with BA and in January 2017 the Speedbird

Pilots Assistance Network (PAN) became the first peer support programme in Europe to be launched after that accident. Dave is the Secretary of EPPSI, the European Pilot Peer Assist Initiative, and co-authored the EPPSI Guide to PSPs. In 2023 he became Chair of IPAAC, the International Peer Assist Aviation Coalition.



Herwin Bongers MaV, Flying for 40 years, 30 as an Airline pilot, Herwin has been heavily involved in collegial support and managing mental health assistance. He has seen the aviation industry evolve in its approach to mental health both in New Zealand and worldwide.

From training in military jets to Highland jungle operations in Papua and 20,000 hours of airline flying now as a 787 Captain, the importance of safety and understanding the contributing human factors have always been a primary pursuit.

After more recent Masters studies, it has become apparent that to understand the impact of mental wellness upon our industry, simply reacting to extremely rare but tragic events does not do it justice. For the hundreds of thousands of aviation professionals conducting their careers whilst living normal lives with normal stressors, treating mental wellness as a binary medical condition fails to contextualise our professional realities.

Herwin promotes adopting a wellness spectrum model and incorporating Threat and Error Management (TEM) processes to achieve the professional skilled knowledge approach needed to drive an attitudinal shift away from fear based decision making.

- Shared Experiences and Skill Development – an MHP Workshop.

PRESENTERS:

- Jóhann Wium Magnússon
- Robert Bor

Presenters will host a training event for mental health professionals, and those interested in the role.

Schedule:

[15 minute] MHP Role Description. EAAP/ESAM project. Main findings and discussion. Comparison with other MHP-roles (e.g. in Olympic sports).

Main Areas of Responsibilities:

[20 minutes] Ensuring Quality (endorsing the management of mental health support-related activities for those seeking assistance from the PSP; and assuring the appropriate confidentiality of the program)

- In workshop: Ask participants about examples on how they do this in their role, share best practices, work through an extreme negative example together.
- Resources available to MHPs: Psychological Clinic rules and guidance materials, GDPR resources,
- [20 minutes] Providing Mental Health Expertise (advise and support peers on their work; provide mental health-related training; indicate if a mental health evaluation is recommended; coordinate intervention or escalation in cases of safety concerns; assist with offers of referrals to those who contact the PSP and need additional outside assistance)
- In workshop: Ask participants about examples on how they do this in their role, share best practices, work through an extreme negative example together.
- Resources available to MHPs: Peer Competence article, list of training topics,
- [20 minutes] Program Management (participating in the governance and operation of the PSP; being involved in peer selection; liaising with internal or external service providers or stakeholders)
- In workshop: Ask participants about examples on how they do this in their role, share best practices, work through an extreme negative example together.
- Resources available to MHPs: Governance modules, peer selection practices, common outside references,

[15 minutes] Summary and Lessons Learned.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Prof Robert Bor (See Rob's Bio under WORKSHOPS above)

Jóhann Wium Magnússon (See Jóhann's speaker bio)

- The Power of Peer Support - Identifying challenges and exploring solutions

PRESENTER: Claire Beharrell - Peer Support Lead- OdiliaClark.

The aviation industry is dynamic, complex and ever-evolving, making the implementation of effective peer support a challenging endeavour. Cultural factors, geographical complexities, and role-specific dynamics can all influence how employees engage with support systems. Additionally, harnessing the data provided by peer support programmes is essential but must be done sensitively and with careful consideration. The ability to strike the right balance between leveraging insights in order to improve support, whilst maintaining strict confidentiality, is essential- but when peer support alone is not enough, what additional resources and strategies should we employ.

How can we ensure that individuals feel valued, empowered, and confident in seeking help when needed? How do we measure the effectiveness of a programme and assess whether it fosters the trust required for meaningful participation?

This interactive and collaborative workshop offers a space to examine the organisational and cultural challenges unique to your area of Aviation. Through shared experiences, meaningful discussions, and practical insights, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how programme structure, training, and visibility influence overall effectiveness. By the end of the session, you will leave with a well-defined action plan designed to strengthen trust, encourage participation, and enhance long-term impact—critical elements in fostering a resilient and safety-driven culture.



My Aviation journey began in 2001 as a Cabin Manager and a member of a CRM training team for a large commercial airline. Since then, I have gained extensive experience particularly in the human aspect of safety culture in high-risk sectors.

I am a graduate member of the British Psychological society(BPS) and an associate member of the EAAP, as well as a Mental Health First Aid instructor. I have extensive experience of delivering presentations, panels and workshops on the subject of peer support, human factors and mental health at the IATA World Safety Operations Conference (2022 - 2025),

IPAAC conference (2022 & 2023) and the European Aviation Wellbeing Alliance conference (2022).

My enthusiasm for fostering a healthy workplace culture and reducing mental health stigma drives my role as Peer Support Lead. The 'Talk to a Peer' programme, with OdiliaClark, provides a collaborative, solution to peer support for pilots cabin crew and engineers with over 30 organisations across the Aviation industry.

The passion for the field stems from personal experience with anxiety and depression . From recovery came the revelation that being mentally healthy is every bit as vital as physical health and the realisation that workplace support is a vital part of effective recovery.

- The Role of a Mental Health Professional in Aviation Peer Support Programs.

PRESENTER: Jessica Auslander, MA, PhD

Peer support is one end of a long and rich spectrum of mental health support services. It is a way to deliver preventive care and resources from those within the same occupational culture. Aviation and other specialized industries often experience unique barriers and peers can establish rapport and facilitate the support process more quickly and effectively than those viewed as "outsiders." Mental health professionals (MHP) can provide training, support, and program guidance for peer groups, maintaining the fidelity of the peer model, minimizing vicarious traumatization or compassion fatigue, and handling escalated cases. This allows the peer to remain in a non-professional role, protecting themselves and their programs from liability. This session will provide an overview of three different models of peer support: MHP on-call, MHP as monitor, and MHP as program leader from the perspective of an experienced MHP.

1. "Participants will be able to describe each of the three models of the integration of an MHP into a peer support program.
2. Participants will be able to identify at least three benefits of including an MHP in a peer support program.

BIOGRAPHY:



Jessica Auslander, MA, PhD, LCMHC, LCAS, NCC, BC-TMH, ICGC-II, SAP is the owner of Professional Wellness Management, PLLC. Dr. Auslander holds bachelor's degrees in music education and psychology from Bowling Green State University, a master's degree in counselor education from The Ohio State University, and a doctoral degree in addiction psychology from Capella University.

She is dually licensed in clinical mental health and addiction counseling, and holds certifications in telehealth (2005), gambling counseling (2014) and is a US Department of Transportation (DOT) Substance Abuse Professional. She has specialized in working with pilots and aviation-related organizations for the past 14 years, providing services to individual pilots, their families, and aviation peer support programs.

She is currently the contracted Mental Health Professional (MHP) for HAWC (NetJets/NJASAP), SOAR (United), PATH (FedEx), ALPA-I, and is the US Lead for the Centre for Aviation Psychology.

- Using Data and Storytelling in Peer Support Programs: A masterclass in understanding and engaging stakeholders

PRESENTERS:

- William R. Hoffman MD
- Aedrian Bekker MA MS
- Heather Healy

"As peer support programs mature within the safety-critical aviation environment, stakeholder expectations for data transparency and evidence of program impact are growing. Questions such as "What is the data telling us?" are increasingly directed toward program managers and coordinators. While valid, these questions present complex challenges in a peer support context, where confidentiality, variability in data quality, and ethical considerations limit conventional metrics.

This workshop addresses how peer support leaders can navigate the tension between the need for meaningful data and the responsibility to protect confidentiality and psychological safety. It explores how to collect data ethically, interpret it wisely, and translate it into compelling narratives that engage diverse stakeholders ranging from executive leadership and operational safety teams to regulators and peer participants.

In the final hour, participants will take part in a hands-on workshop focused on building data into briefings and presentations for leadership audiences. Emphasis will be placed on using narrative to frame data in a way that highlights the real-world value of peer support, conveys its relevance to organizational safety goals, and inspires continued investment in these programs.

Through a mix of presentations, guided group discussions, and interactive exercises, participants will explore what makes data meaningful, how to tailor evidence to stakeholder needs, and how to build a data-informed story that supports program sustainability and system-level integration.

Part 1 – Expert Panel Presentations (50–60 minutes)

1. Dr. William Hoffman:

Why and How to Collect Data in Aviation Peer Support: Turning Insight into Action Without Breaking Trust

2. Aedrian Bekker (CAP):

Challenges and opportunities in multi-operator peer support data collection

3. Heather Healy (TBC):

Data insights and dilemmas from a cabin crew peer support perspective

4. Operational Safety/SMS Specialist:

What counts as ""meaningful"" data from an SMS and leadership perspective

Part 2 – Participant Experience Sharing (60 minutes) - Aedrian Bekker and Heather Healy

Facilitated breakout or full-group discussion (depending on group size)

Participants identify their program's barriers, enablers, and existing strategies for data collection and use

Part 3 – Interactive Case Simulation (60 minutes) – William Hoffman

Dr. William Hoffman:

Telling stories through data – the ABT Structure (1)

Hands-on group activity: Participants work through simulated peer support program data scenarios

Create example narratives for different stakeholders (e.g., safety manager, union rep, executive)

Close with reflection and development of a tailored action plan for each participant

(1) Reference: Olson R. Houston, *We Have a Narrative: Why Science Needs Story*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; 2015.

- The participant will summarize benefits and limitations of data collection in peer support programs.

- The participant will propose a data-driven narrative on the impact of their peer support program for an airline leadership audience”

Biographies:

Dr. William Hoffman (See Billy's Bio under SPEAKERS)



Heather Healy, LCSW-C, CEAP, CCDC and Q-SAP.

Heather has been designing and directing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services across federal, state, and non-governmental workplaces as an external and internal EAP provider and director for nearly 40 years. Over the past twenty-four years, Heather has served as the Director of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA where she provides clinical and administrative oversight for the implementation and delivery of peer supported EAP services for 50,000 Flight Attendants at 20 airlines across 3 continents; designs and develops labor/management prevention and early intervention partnership programs; and crafts workplace policies and procedures that offer employees with behavioral health issues the opportunity to successfully return to their safety sensitive duties.

Heather is also creator of and the program manager for the Flight Attendant Drug and Alcohol Program (FADAP) which has successfully secured congressional authorization and FAA funding since 2010 as a safety initiative addressing both Flight Attendant substance use and mental health disorders. Since 1996, Heather has served as a field instructor for University of Maryland MSW graduate students interested in pursuing a career in the EAP field. Heather currently serves as a consulting member of the International Civil Aviation Organization's Mental Health Working Group which is exploring global best practices and research on the psychological wellbeing of aviation safety professionals. Heather is the Clinical Coordinator for the State of Maryland's Dental Hygiene impaired professionals' program which she designed and has clinically overseen since 1993. Finally, Heather maintains a private psychotherapy practice. She is licensed in Maryland and DC as a clinical social worker. Heather holds multiple professional certifications in the areas of workplace assistance and substance use disorders. She is also a person in long term recovery since April 8, 1980



Aedrian Bekker is a Chartered Clinical and Organisation Psychologist. He is registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and is a member of the British Psychology Society.

While Aedrian started his career as a clinician in the NHS, for the past 16 years he has worked with senior leaders and their teams in blue chip companies around the globe. With an expertise in human behaviour in complex organisations, he has worked in heavily regulated and customer sensitive industries such as defence, nuclear, automotive, finance, telecommunications, utilities, industrial relations and of course, aviation.

Aedrian leads a team of psychologists and consultants that have designed and delivered award winning psychological interventions that have been credited for their innovation, integrity and user engagement. In British Airways for example, this includes working with over 2000+ flight crew as well as programmes for all senior cabin crew and facilitation of joint Management and Trade Union projects. As a psychologist, he has a deep insight into the unique challenges facing a highly professional and largely remote workforce - and the organisational contexts within which they work.

Aedrian's team use traditional methods alongside emerging technologies to create scalable and effective psychological solutions.

- Walk the Talk, an exercise in self management; Air India Peer Support Programmes, “Buddy@AI”

SPEAKERS:

- Alios Farthofer,
- Geetanjali Khadria

This workshop will provide and discuss practical knowledge and skills for the enhancement of the self for the aviation personnel. The workshop is based on the following assumptions. Aviation safety has traditionally emphasized organizational responsibility through systems, structures, and training. Yet, the individual's responsibility for self-study, self-care, self-awareness, self-management, self-help, and self-regulation is equally critical.

Ultimately, each individual is solely responsible for the execution of their role and responsibility. Just as organizations invest in training and oversight, investment in self-training and self-awareness is the foundation to help play their role effectively — whether in the cockpit or any other safety-critical environment. This is a preventive approach to empower the base.

All safety trainings — Threat and Error Management (TEM), Crew Resource Management (CRM), Competency-Based Training — rest on one essential foundation: the individual. Mental health, daily routines, capacity for self-regulation, and levels of self-evolution form the bedrock of professional performance.

Without strengthening this internal foundation, external training cannot achieve its full potential. The Human behind the Machine is the focus as each one is unique with variable inner conditions from moment to moment. This is the way to address the reason for falling into the river in the first place. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO, 2020) also recognizes mindfulness as a practical individual approach for improving resilience which supports aviation safety.

Key Takeaways

1. Organizational and individual responsibility in aviation safety are two halves of the same whole. Peer support, but not only in retrospect.
2. The quality of safety performance reflects the individual's inner foundation — mental health, awareness, and self-management.
3. Training programs succeed only when external systems align with internal self-awareness for desired execution and results.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize self-awareness and self-regulation as the basis for enhancing core non-technical competencies — the foundation of both mental health and safe performance — with emphasis on “the Human behind the Machine.”
2. Apply practical, science-based methods (self-reflection, meditation, relaxation) to activate self-regulation, build resilience, and strengthen mental health as a preventive strategy for future operations. Co-regulate with others in the system, as we are all part of the whole.
3. Integrate awareness of self and others into daily practice, using peer support as a protective system that enhances confidence, capability, and well-being across the aviation community. Each individual's capacity to manage stress and emotions effectively determines the collective outcome.
4. Share the principles of self-awareness to others in safety relevant position.

BIOGRAPHIES

Capt. Geetanjali Khadria serves as a Boeing 787 Commander at Air India with more than 10,000 flight hours. She has significant experience in operations, training, and human factors, having also led Crew Resource Management modules on communication and safety.



She is the co-creator of Buddy@AI, India's first airline-led peer-support program, launched in 2023 for pilots and now extended to all crew, with future inclusion of engineers and ground staff. Through the Learning & Living Lab, she has introduced a unique, story-based and non-preachy approach to preventive mental health education in aviation.

Beyond the cockpit, she is a writer at The Thinking Captain and a Heartfulness meditation trainer. Her mission: to put people at the center of safety, leadership, and aviation's future.



Dr. Alois Farthofer studied Psychology at the University of Salzburg and is certified as Aviation Psychologist, Work Psychologist, Clinical and Health Psychologist.

He is working as an Aviation Mental Health Professional for different Airlines in Austria according to EASA CAT.GEN.MPA 215, and is assisting Air India in the development and application of a Peer Support Program according to the Indian Aviation Authority DGCA. Additionally Dr. Farthofer is doing psychological assessment and evaluation of pilots according to EASA requirements.

Dr Farthofer is a member of multiple psychological associations, including the European Association for Aviation Psychology (EAAP) and the Austrian Association for Aviation Psychology. He is further board member of the Austrian Academy for Aviation Medicine.

PANELS:

- Characterizing US pilot peer support programs as a potential aviation safety risk control

SPEAKERS:

- Ted Sienknecht (MITRE)
- Elizabeth Ryan (MITRE)
- Travis Ludwig (ALPA)

This session presents findings from a first-of-its-kind study to characterize US mainline passenger airlines' pilot peer support programs (PSPs) and their potential role in aviation safety risk management. This exploratory qualitative and quantitative study involved PSP and pilot health experts using a structured elicitation methodology. The findings fill a critical knowledge gap about PSPs and include estimates about their usage and effects as well as salient similarities and differences about their current operation. The study was designed and conducted by the Aeromedical Safety Coalition (ASC), which brings airlines, associations, and the FAA together to advance safer skies through healthier pilots and air traffic controllers.

Background:

Recent initiatives from the FAA Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) on Mental Health, the NTSB Mental Health and Aviation Safety Roundtable, and EASA's MESAFE project emphasize the need for proactive, system-level approaches to psychological risk in aviation. PSPs are one such strategy, providing confidential, peer-led support that may contribute to Safety Management System (SMS) objectives.

Problem:

In the U.S., PSPs are expanding, yet their operational characteristics and potential safety impacts remain poorly described, limiting integration with SMS and alignment with ARC, NTSB, and MESAFE recommendations.

Method:

The ASC conducted an exploratory mixed-methods study with PSP leaders from 7 major US passenger carriers as well as aviation medicine experts. Structured expert elicitation estimated utilization and perceived safety and health effects. Qualitative interviews characterized PSP operations, promotion, and evaluation, in addition to similarities, differences, and innovations across PSP programs.

Results:

Findings provide first-of-its-kind estimates of US PSP use and perceived safety/health effects. Programs shared core principles, training approaches, and limitations in SMS integration, but varied in terms of governance, operations, promotion, and methods for evaluating PSP effectiveness. Experts identified PSP contributions to hazard identification, early mental health intervention, and aviation safety culture, suggesting PSPs may represent a replicable, culturally acceptable risk mitigation.

By the end of this panel, participants will be able to:

- Describe the scope and attributes of pilot peer support programs (PSP) at US mainline passenger carriers.
- Understand the methodology used to obtain reasonable quantitative estimates from PSP experts in the absence of established metrics.
- Identify differences and similarities in US PSP training, program operations, promotion, and evaluation.
- Describe innovations and promising practices implemented by US PSPs.
- Describe correlations between selected PSP attributes and perceived safety and mental health outcomes.
- Identify stakeholder-specific recommendations for enhancing PSPs.
- Understand the need for metrics and collaboration to enable integration of PSPs into Safety Management Systems (SMS).

- Identify areas of future research needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of PSPs as an aviation safety risk mitigation.

BIOGRAPHIES:



Ted Sienknecht, PMP, CISSP, CIPT
Principal Architect, Data-driven Solutions
The MITRE Corporation

Ted Sienknecht is a leader in data- and partnership-driven outcomes at the MITRE Corporation, a nonprofit that delivers objective, cost-effective solutions in the public interest. Ted currently coordinates the Aeromedical Safety Coalition (ASC), which brings airlines, associations, and the FAA together to advance safer skies through healthier pilots and air traffic controllers. He is the principal investigator for ASC member-designed studies, including the 2025 ASC study characterizing mainline US pilot peer support programs as an aviation safety risk control.

As the Principal Architect for Data-driven Solutions at MITRE, Ted collaborates with customers across sectors to solve problems beyond what any single party can address on their own. Ted applies his analytic and systems engineering expertise for customer mission impact, whether single organization or multi-sector. Ted accelerates value delivery to involved parties via MITRE Assemble™, a capability he co-developed that harnesses the power of collaboration and system-of-systems approaches to solve complex, at-scale challenges.

Ted has led the development and delivery of secure, user-centered informatics solutions for more than 25 years. Ted founded MITRE's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) community of practice and has played a central role in rapidly prototyping and operating multiple PPPs in healthcare, transportation, and finance. Examples include the Healthcare Fraud Prevention Partnership and the Partnership for Analytics Research in Traffic Safety. Before joining MITRE, Ted delivered strategic, data-centric projects as a manager at Arthur Andersen and Deloitte Consulting. He earned B.S. and M.S. degrees in Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech as well as PMI PMP, PMI-ACP, ISC2 CISSP, and IAPP CIPT certifications. He was awarded a US patent for an automated provisioning framework for secure cloud analytics. Ted has been recognized as an expert in advancing multi-party and system-of-systems solutions for our nation's biggest challenges.



Elizabeth Ryan, MPH
Principal, Health Communication Science
The MITRE Corporation

Elizabeth (Liz) Ryan is a public health professional with more than 25 years of experience managing health communication and partner engagement initiatives for federal government agencies in the domestic and global health arenas. Until October 2025, she worked for the non-profit MITRE Corporation, serving as the communication lead for the Aeromedical Safety Coalition (ASC). She was a co-investigator on a recent ASC study to characterize pilot peer support programs as an aviation safety risk control.

During her almost 4 years at MITRE, Liz led communication and engagement efforts to improve Veterans' well-being, help community health centers assess operational excellence, explain surprise billing protections to consumer advocates, and promote privacy-preserving record linkage technology to state health departments. She has provided strategic guidance to numerous US federal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Health Resources & Services Administration, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.

Prior to joining MITRE, Liz spent 15 years as an internal and external contractor for CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, implementing national immunization campaigns across the lifespan. This involved engaging with medical associations, public health organizations, advocacy organizations, and online health partners. She served on CDC's COVID-19 Vaccination Task Force, working with national partners to build vaccine confidence. Liz previously spent a decade in the global health arena, working with stakeholders in Africa, Ukraine, Haiti, and the Philippines on national behavior change communication programs. Liz holds a Master of Public Health degree from Emory University and a bachelor's degree in French from Georgetown University.



Capt. Travis Ludwig
ALPA-I Pilot Assistance Chair
Air Line Pilots Association, International

Travis Ludwig is currently a United Airlines Captain flying the Boeing 737, based out of DCA/IAD. Captain Ludwig started as a member of ALPA in September 2001 as a first officer at Comair five days before September 11th. This experience would shape Travis' understanding of the importance of ALPA and ALPA's extensive resources.

After raising a family, Travis joined the volunteer ranks as an Aeromedical volunteer in 2015 for United Airlines MEC, eventually serving as the United Aeromedical Vice Chair then Chair.

Prior to being the ALPA-I Pilot Assistance Chair, Travis served as the ALPA-I Pilot Assistance Vice Chair. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Travis became an instrumental connection to the United Pilot group and ALPA-I and helped develop a coordinated ALPA response. As a member of the RTCA group writing a Guidance Document on Aircraft Cleaning and Disinfection, Travis helped cement the ALPA priorities in the RTCA paper. In addition, Travis Co-Chaired the 2024 "Mental Health and Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee" which made 24 groundbreaking recommendations to lower barriers to reporting, expedite processing, and improve the mental health of both pilots and controllers. Travis still serves on the United Airlines MEC Environmental Safety Committee and Aeromedical committees.

As the Pilot Assistance Chair, Travis oversees ALPA-I's: Aeromedical, Canadian Pilot Assistance, Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP), Human Intervention Motivational Study (HIMS), Pilot Peer Support (PPS), and Professional Standards committees.

- Civilian Wings, Hot Zone: Peer Support in a world of conflict and crisis.

SPEAKERS:

- Wendy Santihano.
- Rob Borr
- Dr Salty Salzman (AME Pilot USAF)
- Markus Holowenko (head of Lufthansa security)

As civilian airlines increasingly operate in or near active conflict zones, aviation personnel are exposed to unpredictable psychological stressors—often without the benefit of military-style resilience training. Unlike military pilots, most safety-sensitive personnel in commercial aviation are not prepared for the mental strain of navigating environments shaped by drone threats, shifting no-fly zones, or nearby warfare. Peer support teams, which play a vital role in maintaining mental health and safety culture, now face the dual challenge of supporting colleagues in distress while being subjected to the same stressors themselves.

This panel explores how peer support structures can adapt to meet these emerging needs. It will examine whether existing trauma models remain sufficient, what skills help peers respond effectively, maintaining their wellbeing while providing care.

Core questions include:

- Can we expect peers to respond when they themselves are also requested to operate in or near conflict zones?
- Who holds the duty of care? How can organizations, peer teams, and leadership best share responsibility for psychological safety in conflict-exposed operations?
- What strategies should be implemented to prevent volunteer burnout, maintain boundaries, and enhance psychological safety within peer teams?
-

Rationale and Significance:

The intersection of expanding war zones and ongoing civilian aviation operations creates complex psychological challenges for aviation personnel. Key discussion points include establishing realistic scope and boundaries for peer intervention, identifying essential training components and essential training tools.

While focussing on peer team practice, the panel may generate insights for operator leadership in recognizing, resourcing, and valuing peer support as an essential pillar of safety and operational resilience.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Prof Robert Borr (See Rob's Bio under WORKSHOPS above)

Wendy Santihano (See Wendy's Bio under WORKSHOPS above)

Dr Salty Salzman (See Dr Salzman's Bio under SPEAKERS)



Markus Holowenko (head of Lufthansa security) Markus Holowenko is Geopolitical Risk Analyst serving as Team Lead for the Lufthansa Group Corporate Security Risk Management, specializing in overflight security and risk mitigation in and close to conflict zones. He brings extensive experience from roles in aviation and transport security across Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia, with a background in Political Science and Peace & Conflict Studies.

- Empowering Support Through Unity: Leveraging Union Peer Assistance Programs to Serve Distinct Workgroup Needs and Advance Systemwide Best Practices at United Airlines

SPEAKERS:

- Jennifer Grega and
- Jennifer Mannan, AFA EAP chairs at United ;
- Mike Brooks IBT UALEAP peer representative at United,
- Bryan Hutchinson, IAMAW District 141 EAP director

This panel brings together representatives from three union peer assistance programs at United Airlines—covering pilots, flight attendants, and flight technicians, to showcase how each program uniquely supports the distinct needs of its workgroup while contributing to a shared vision of holistic employee well-being. These peer-led initiatives address challenges such as occupational stress, substance use recovery, mental health support, and crisis intervention, all within the cultural and operational realities of each job role.

Through a collaborative dialogue, panelists will highlight how tailoring support to specific workgroups fosters deeper trust, greater participation, and more relevant interventions. At the same time, the presentation will examine how these programs develop and share best practices, coordinate procedures, and align resources to benefit all of these United employees. Emphasis will be placed on cross-union cooperation, lessons learned, and the importance of peer-to-peer solidarity in cultivating a resilient, supported workforce. Attendees will gain insights into scalable strategies for building or enhancing peer assistance models across diverse occupational settings.

BIOGRAPHIES:



Jennifer Grega is the Master Executive Council (MEC) Chair of the Association of Flight Attendants Employee Assistance Program at United Airlines. Jennifer is a certified labor assistance professional and a certified employee assistance professional. In her role as chair, she oversees the operations of all EAP peer services at the 14 local bases for United Airlines.

Jennifer is the recipient of the lifetime achievement award issued by the President of the United States for her twenty six years as a volunteer with the AFA EAP program.



Jennifer Mannan is a 28-year Flight Attendant with United Airlines, serving as an International Purser. She has dedicated 15 years of volunteer service to the Association of Flight Attendants, including 13 years as Chairperson of the Local Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and 3 years as Vice Chairperson of the Master Executive Council EAP.

Jennifer is a Certified Employee Assistance Professional (CEAP), Substance Abuse Professional (SAP), and Labor Assistance Professional-Certified (LAP-C).

In her leadership roles, Jennifer oversees the distribution of more than 120,000 critical incident reports annually, supports over 85 local EAP representatives with case management and referrals, develops monthly informational bulletins, and connects members and their families with trusted, confidential resources to promote their well-being.

- Lessons Learned from Uplift: Building and Sustaining a Collegiate Peer Support Program

SPEAKERS:

- Sky Overbo,
- Zoe Thompson,
- Lydia Schock,
- Uplift peer TBD

Uplift, a peer support initiative designed for students in a collegiate aviation program, was created to address the unique mental health needs of future aviation professionals. Now in its third year, the program has evolved through a process of ongoing reflection, feedback, and adaptation. This presentation will share key lessons learned from both successes and setbacks, offering a candid look at the challenges of developing and sustaining a peer support program in a high-performance, stigma-sensitive environment.

Topics will include managing peer turnover in a transient student population, refining peer selection and training processes, navigating the complexities of building trust between peer supporters and their classmates, and increasing program visibility and utilization. Attendees will gain insight into how our team has approached these challenges, the adjustments made along the way, and the strategies that have proven most effective in cultivating a culture of support. This session aims to provide practical guidance for others building peer support programs, particularly in specialized or high-stakes environments.

- Identify common challenges in establishing and sustaining peer support programs within specialized or high-stress academic environments, such as collegiate aviation.
- Describe effective strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining peer supporters in a transient student population.
- Explain the importance of building trust among students, peer supporters, and program leadership to foster program credibility and engagement.
- Analyze the impact of peer perception on help-seeking behaviors and peer support utilization within aviation communities.
- Evaluate program adjustments made through trial and error to improve visibility, accessibility, and relevance of peer support services.
- Apply lessons learned from Uplift to inform the development or refinement of peer support programs in other higher education settings.

BIOGRAPHIES:



Sky Overbo, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist employed by the University of North Dakota, specializing in aviation and collegiate mental health. She serves as a HIMS- trained mental health provider, completing assessments for medical certification and works closely with pilots, flight students, and aviation organizations to support mental wellness and safety in aviation.

Dr. Overbo serves as the trainer and clinical consultant for Uplift, a peer support program designed for collegiate aviation students, where she helps equip peer supporters with the skills to foster mental wellness within their community. She regularly presents on mental health stigma reduction, peer support, and culturally informed care in high-performance and safety-sensitive environments. Her work bridges the gap between mental health professionals and the aviation industry, promoting early intervention and long-term support for aviation professionals.



Zoe Thompson, Chair of the UpLift Peer Support Program at the University of North Dakota. She is double majoring in Psychology and Commercial aviation while working as a CFI at UND.



Lydia Schock, Vice Chair of the UpLift Peer Support Program at the University of North Dakota. She is majoring in Commercial Aviation and UND.



Riley Madsen, Uplift Peer Supporter majoring in Commercial Aviation and minoring in Atmospheric Science at the University of North Dakota. He is the Vice president of the UND Sportsman's Club

- Regulatory, Program Implementation and Research Updates on Aviation Mental Health.

SPEAKERS:

- Quay Snyder – Moderator
- Jóhann Wium Magnússon
- Dr Billy Hoffman
- Ken Morse
- Heather Healy
- Andrew LeBovidge
- Dave Fielding
- Herwin Bongers

Describe the full spectrum of peer support programs for all ASP's. Although the regulators and commercial / ATC ops drive a lot of the early initiatives related ways to break down barriers to HCA, we have long standing successful programs at Cabin Crew and in the Maintenance world that others may not be aware of and that we need to highlight. We also have evolving programs in the aviation university / training world and those initiated by airline management voluntarily such as in the Mid-East and South America. The challenge will be developing a comprehensive list of all programs we are aware of and asking the audience if they are aware of others. This will build awareness for all, open up new possibilities for those that are new to the process and bring an interactive experience for attendees.

Mention the programs that are established and during the panel, ask a rep from each program to stand up after their program is mentioned so that audience members may better connect later in the seminar with those programs that have a special interest for them. That way we can be very inclusive without having 20 people on the stage.

There are still other areas to cover including research, CAA initiatives and IPAAC/AsMA MHWG visions. However, we don't want to have speakers on the introductory panel that will be giving full presentations later. This would be an overview and a taste of what is to come while introducing key players to the full audience including our EB

- Participants will be familiar with government and CAA directed activities related to mental health research, policy initiatives and reforms across the globe
- Participants will be familiar with new regulatory changes regarding mental health certification policies
- Participants will be familiar with longstanding practices and peer-led groups in aviation safety professionals not subject to medical certification to support fellow professionals
- Participants will be familiar with evolving and newly created peer-support programs for aviation personnel and aspirants such as those initiated by aviation schools, organizations and employers
- Participants will be exposed to published scientific research on the successes and challenges of peer support programs in aviation
- Participants will be exposed to position papers published in other than scientific peer reviewed journals advocating for mental health support for aviation professionals
- Participants will be familiar with initiatives by IPAAC and its structure to promote mental wellbeing in all aviation professionals
- Participants will be familiar with other organizations and groups advocating for mental well being in aviation.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Andrew LeBovidge, (See Andrew's Bio under WORKSHOP above)

Dr Billy Hoffman (See Billy's SPEAKER Bio)

Dave Fielding, (See Dave's Bio under WORKSHOP above)

Herwin Bongers, (See Herwin's Bio under WORKSHOP above)

Jóhann Wium Magnússon, (See Jóhann's SPEAKER Bio)

Heather Healy, (See Heather's Bio under WORKSHOP above)



Ken Morse, is the Immediate Past National Chairperson for Labor Assistance Professionals and former (10 year) National Chairperson for Labor Assistance Professionals. Ken is the Director of the TWU Tech Ops Per Support Program at American Airlines. Ken is currently employed by American Airlines as an aircraft mechanic and he has been with American for more than 36 years. Ken has a true passion for Employee Assistance work and has been working in the field for more than 30 years. Ken served in the US Navy as an aircraft mechanic from 1976 to 1980. Ken has a beautiful and supportive wife, three daughters and eight grandchildren that are the true treasures of his life.



Dr Quay Snyder, is President/CEO of Virtual Flight Surgeons, [Aviation Medicine Advisory Service] providing medical certification and aviation safety guidance for pilot and air traffic controller unions as well as business and general aviation pilots. Dr. Snyder has been the Air Line Pilots Association, International Aeromedical Advisor since 2010, after serving as Associate Aeromedical Advisor since 1994. Since 2015, he has served as the FAA / ALPA HIMS Program Manager and has over 20 years experience sponsoring and monitoring substance addicted pilots

Quay holds board certification in Aerospace Medicine, Addiction Medicine, Family Practice and Occupational Medicine. He is a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, Duke University School of Medicine and the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. He served in the USAF, USAF Reserve and Colorado Air National Guard for 25 years as a flight surgeon, glider instructor pilot and in leadership roles.

Dr. Snyder is active in many aviation safety committees and organizations, both nationally and internationally. He is an AsMA Fellow and member of several of AsMA's Constituent and Affiliate organizations. He serves on the Board of Directors of the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine and on the Board of Trustees of the National Aviation Hall of Fame from 2014-2020. He has chaired the National Business Aviation Associations Safety Committee's Fitness for Duty Working Group and served on both the medical expert group for the FAA's 2015 Pilot Fitness Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) and as the Medical Lead for the 2024 FAA Mental Health and Aviation Medical Certification ARC. He co-chairs AsMA's Pilot Mental Health Working Group. Dr. Snyder also serves on several ICAO working groups including Problematic Use of Psychoactive Substances (PUPS), Mental Health, Medical Certification and Standards and CAPSCA. He is a member of the Flight Safety Foundation's Business Advisory Council and is on the faculty of the University of Southern California's Viterbi School of Engineering in the Aviation Safety and Security Program teaching in Fatigue Risk Management and Human Performance, Resiliency and Leadership courses.

Dr. Snyder has been an FAA Certified Flight Instructor (Gold Seal) since 1975 and actively serves as a Designated Pilot Examiner since 1998 and FAA Safety Team representative since 2003. He received the Soaring Society of America's World Distance Award for 40,000 km (Earth's circumference) of solo cross country flight in his ASK-24B glider. He is also active in triathlons qualifying for the 2016, 2020 and 2022 Ironman Hawaii World Championships and in 2020, qualified for the International Triathlon Union's World Championships representing Team USA in every triathlon distance from sprint to long course as an age group amateur.

- The Next Generation in Aviation Mental Health

SPEAKERS:

- Sky Overbo,
- Priya Doobaree

As the aviation industry continues to evolve, so too does the workforce that sustains it. With a growing number of next-generation professionals entering the field, our understanding of mental health, interpersonal relationships, and workplace engagement is undergoing a significant shift. This presentation explores how younger generations view their relationship with work and how their perspective shapes their openness to mental health support, particularly through peer support programs.

We will examine the unique ways in which the next generation communicates, including their reliance on digital platforms, preference for authenticity, and emphasis on emotional intelligence. These preferences, while distinct from traditional norms, offer an opportunity to reframe how mental health resources are communicated and delivered in the aviation environment.

A key focus of the session will be the role of empathy and mutual understanding in fostering effective communication across generational lines. As differences in communication styles can lead to misunderstanding or disengagement, we'll highlight practical strategies for bridging these gaps—both in peer support interactions and broader organizational cultures.

By embracing generational diversity and adapting our approaches, we can create a more inclusive, responsive, and resilient mental health support ecosystem within aviation. This session aims to inspire leaders, peers, and mental health advocates to reimagine support through the lens of empathy, innovation, and shared purpose.

- Describe how next-generation aviation professionals perceive work, mental health, and peer support systems.
- Identify key communication preferences of younger professionals, including their use of digital platforms and emphasis on authenticity and emotional intelligence.
- Analyze how generational differences in communication styles can impact engagement and mental health support in the aviation workplace.
- Apply strategies to foster empathy and improve communication across generational lines in peer support and organizational settings.
- Develop approaches to reframe mental health outreach and engagement in aviation by leveraging generational diversity and innovation.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Sky Overbo, (See Sky's Bio under PANEL above)



Priya Doobaree Aviation Safety Standards -Representing IFALPA at ICAO - Air Navigation Commission - Aviation-Organisational Psychologist- Coach- Masters in International Business Administration - MBA - IAE