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**Subject: Can pregnant women sail aboard Scripps research vessels?**

Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) is committed to reasonably accommodating all persons who wish to work aboard research vessels that we operate. Scripps welcomes pregnant women on board under the following conditions:

1. they are within the first 24 weeks of their pregnancy, and
2. they are medically fit (requires a note from their doctor).

**Rationale**

Our policy attempts to fairly balance the risks to all involved. A significant risk to the individual is that research vessels do not sail with a physician on board, and do not have specialized medical equipment to care for pregnancy-related issues should they occur. Research vessels often work far from the nearest port, sometimes in remote areas of the globe. If a medical emergency develops, the ship may require many days of transit before a patient may be disembarked for medical care. A lesser risk is that some medicines for seasickness may not be suitable for pregnant women.

There are also risks to the mission. These include the potential for losing operational days if a medical evacuation is required, and those days are usually not replaceable due to funding/scheduling constraints.

Maritime medical practitioners note that "*complications at any time during pregnancy, in particular miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies, are always more dramatic at sea and therefore dreaded by the medical staff, especially on cruises to remote areas where shore-side medical facilities and blood transfusions are not available*" (Dahl, 1999). A medical review conducted by a panel of physicians assembled by the Cruise Lines International Association (a nonprofit trade association of 24 cruise lines representing 97% of North American cruise capacity) concluded that passengers and crew should be prohibited from sailing if they will have entered the 24th week (or later) of pregnancy at any time during the cruise (Dahl, 2007). This is now the standard for most of the cruise line industry.

U.S. government agencies have policies that are somewhat more conservative. The U.S. Coast Guard policy is that no pregnant service member shall deploy or remain aboard a ship, including small boat duty, beyond her 20th week of pregnancy. The Navy has a similar 20-week limit.

**References**

- Dahl, E., Pregnancy at sea: 24th week of gestation is the limit, *International Maritime Health*, 2007, 58, 1-4.
- Dahl E. *Surgical emergencies at sea*. In: Cruise medicine (ed. Harrison T), Maritime Health Systems, Ltd., Annapolis 1999.