

# **The Psychological Assessment of Pilots during the routine annual examination**

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# **The Main Priorities for an AME**

- **To assess the physical and psychological fitness of Airline Pilots, Air Traffic Control Officers and Cabin Crew to fulfil safely their role in aviation**
- **To comply with the requirements of the regulations of the relevant licensing authority**
- **To promote and encourage a healthy lifestyle**
- **To provide continuous support and advice on medical and psychological issues arising between annual or six monthly medical examinations**
- **To develop a professional, friendly and reassuring AME/Pilot relationship based on mutual trust and understanding**

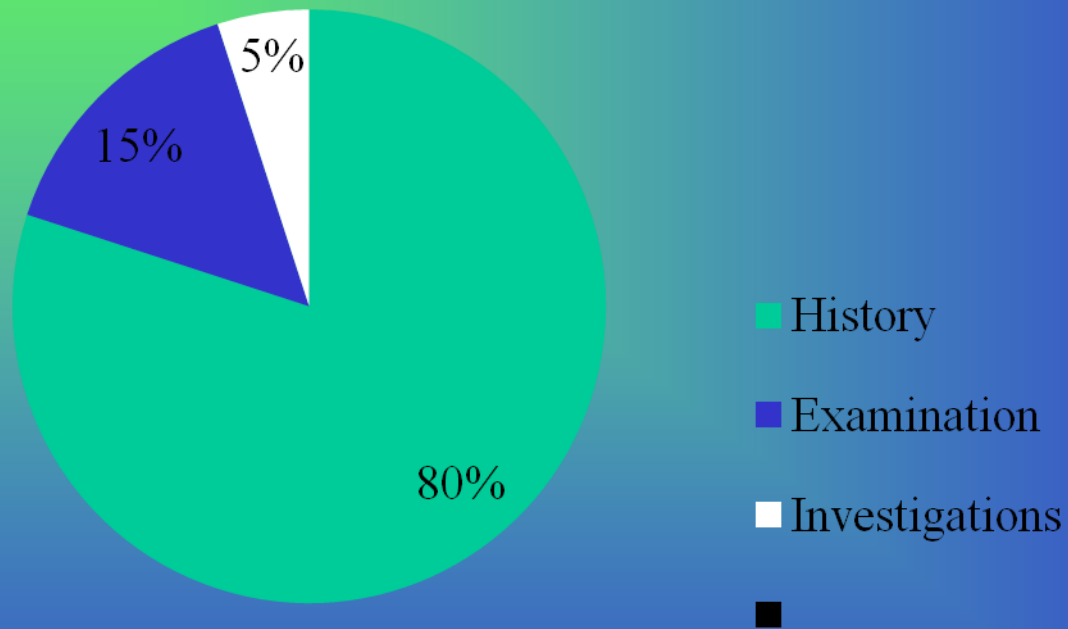
# **The Examination**

- **The History**

- **The Clinical Examination**

- **Investigation**

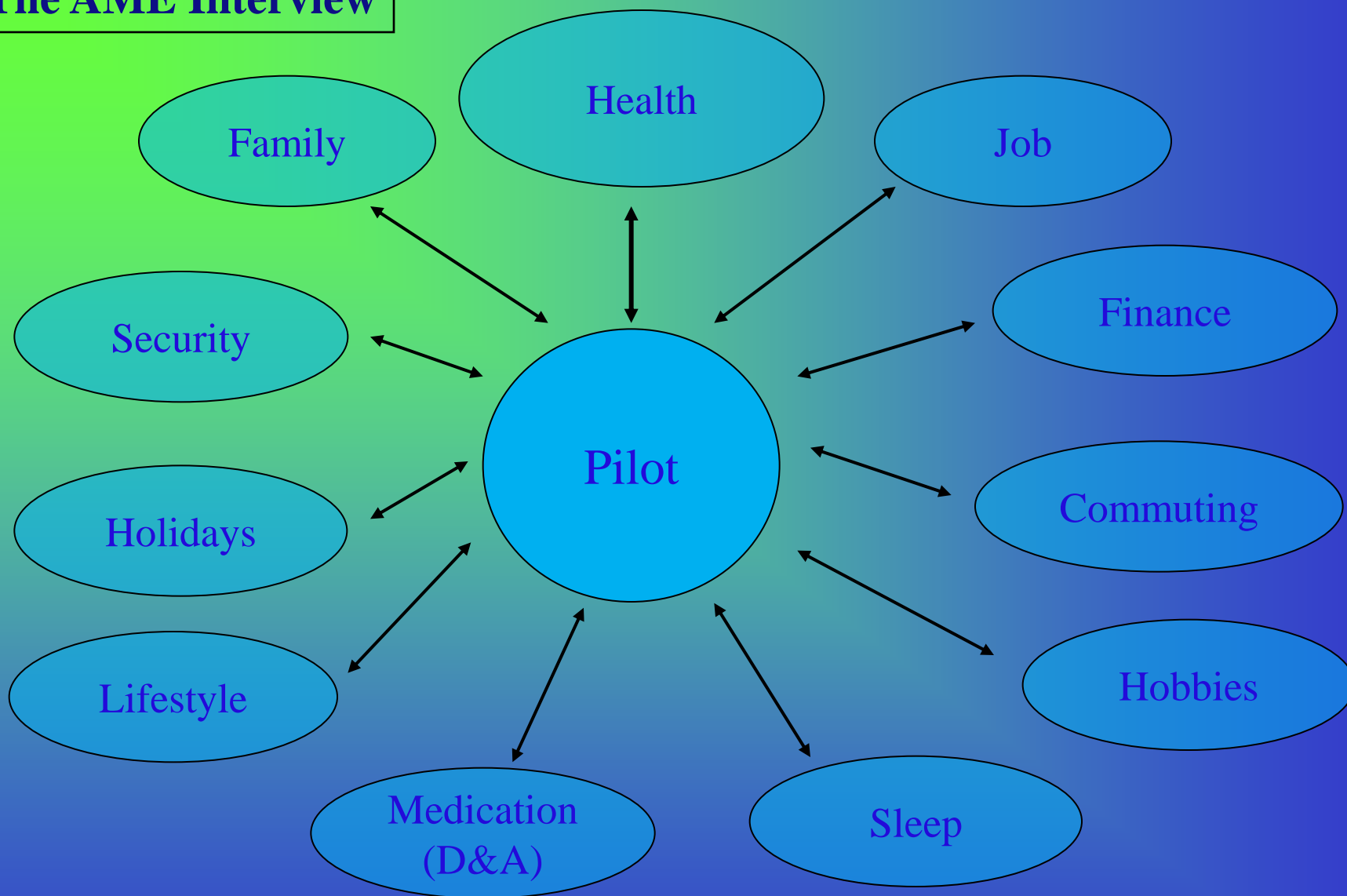
# Time spent for each examination



# The Application Form

- **Recreational drugs - alcohol, tobacco, others**
- **Medications - OTC, Prescribed**
- **Check pilot's entries and accuracy on application form. N.B.'tickitis'!!! ( N.B. Legal/Insurance requirements)**
- **NB Thoroughness, deliberate omissions, non deliberate omissions, life-time not just recent for initial examinations. ? Is form mainly for the lawyers!!!**
- **Importance of non disclosure**
- **Pilot/AME signature (witness)**

# The AME Interview



[adapted from Hudson & Herbert, 2017]



# Physical/psychological fitness

- **Job satisfaction/dissatisfaction**
  - **Exercise**
  - **Diet**
  - **Alcohol/Drugs**
- **Hobbies/ second job?**
  - **Commuting**
  - **Family**
  - **Sleep**
  - **Fatigue**

# Psychological History

- **Stress**
- **Anxiety**
- **Sleep history, Fatigue, Epworth sleep scale, Sleep Apnoea**
- **Depression; ? use of depression scoring questionnaires**
- **Alcohol problems**
- **Drug dependency**
- **‘Gut-reaction’**



# Stress factors

- **Work Hours, Rosters, Commuting, Jet Lag, Security, Terrorism**
- **Fatigue (Fatigue Risk Management Systems)**
- **Job security, Pay and Conditions,**
- **Cosmic Radiation**
- **Drug and Alcohol screening**
- **? Second jobs, Financial problems**
- **Marriage, Family**

# Pitfalls

- **Poor history taking**
- **Hurried examinations**
- **‘Tickitis’!!**
- **Deniers - pilots want to pass the examination!**
- **Bogus applicants - NB photo identification**
- **Too low index of suspicion**
- **Poor or incomplete record keeping.**

# **Problems and difficulties in Psychological assessment by the AME**

- **Pilots' anxiety**
- **Fear of failing medical**
- **Confidentiality issues**
- **Pilot non-disclosure issues**
- **Lack of trust by pilot in the AME**
- **Lack of time**

# **Pilot expectations from an AME**

- **Ease of access for appointments**
- **Adequate time for the examination**
- **Complete trust in confidentiality**
- **Pleasant ambience of the consulting room**
- **Well trained support staff**
- **Professional and non judgemental attitude**
- **‘Listening ear’**
- **Trust in relationship with relevant aviation authority**

# **Role of AME**

- **Understand the pilot's working environment**
- **Does the pilot have access to a Peer Support Group?**
- **The AME's knowledge should be up to date**
- **Generate a warm and friendly atmosphere in the consulting room**
- **Be prepared to listen and allow plenty of time**
- **Use whole examination time for sensitive questioning of pilot**
- **Encourage pilot to be open about sensitive issues**
- **Avoid any conflict of interest**
- **Be available in between medical examinations to assist pilot with medical and/or psychological problems**

# Psychological tests

- **Formal psychological tests are not part of the routine medical examination**
- **Psychological tests may be useful when administered by a trained aviation psychologist**
- **AME should understand what tests are available, their value and their limitations**

# **The role of the Aviation Psychologist**

- **Ideally AME should have access to an Aviation psychologist**
- **Need for a sound AME/psychologist professional relationship**
- **Aviation psychologist may perform formal psychological testing**

# **Pilot Peer Support Group**

- **Vital role of PPSG**
- **AME needs to know if pilot has access to a PPSG**
- **If not then AME should be able to advise pilot how to access a PPSG**
- **AME/PPSG relationship based on mutual understanding and trust**



# Conclusion

**An AME should:-**

- **Allow sufficient time for each medical**
- **Develop a friendly professional relationship with the pilot based on mutual understanding of each person's role**
- **Keep up-to-date**
- **Undergo periodic re-training**

# **Pilot Psychological Assessment by the AME**

**Thank you for listening**

**Any Questions**