

DMAC in writing. The committee was presented with incorrect and inflated data on the number of cases of decompression sickness treated by the Royal Navy. The analysis of these statistics did not take into account important factors, such as the record good weather in the UK in 1989 which surveys have shown caused an increase of almost 100% in the number of dives conducted. Those who discussed British recreational diving practices seemed singularly ill-informed about those practices.

During the discussion, many members remained silent throughout, whilst the document was largely drafted by a few individuals, each of whom appeared to me to have vested interests in exaggerating the amount of amateur diving accidents.

Whilst I am in favour of any genuine attempt to improve amateur diver safety, I do not believe that is the purpose of the statement from DMAC. I believe that it is no coincidence that this document was released less than one month before the UK Department of Energy report on decompression sickness from commercial offshore air-diving operations on the UK continental shelf during 1982 to 1988 was released. This data clearly shows that professional divers were subjected to an unacceptable incidence of decompression sickness as a result of relaxation of Diving Safety Memorandum 7/86 by the Department of Energy when pressure to do so was applied by the diving and oil industries. Since those most in favour of producing the DMAC statement were aware of the conclusions of that report, I believe that the DMAC statement on sport diving is merely a diversion. DMAC might have spent its time more usefully producing a statement on the report by the Department of Energy.

Peter Wilmshurst  
Medical Adviser to BS-AC

#### Reference

- 1 Diving Medical Advisory Committee. Statement on Sports Diving. *SPUMS J* 1990; 20 (1): 57-58

*The above letter has been shown to Dr Adkisson whose reply appears below.*

4170 Jackdaw Street,  
San Diego,  
California 92103,  
USA

23 October 1990

Sir,

Dr Wilmshurst's letter is inaccurate and misleading. It would not be worth my time in replying except that divers

reading the *SPUMS Journal*<sup>1</sup> may be adversely affected if the statements he made are left unchallenged.

DMAC (Diving Medical Advisory Committee) is a group made up of physicians and diving industry personnel who meet on a voluntary, unpaid basis to review and comment on safety aspects in any part of the diving industry and this includes the sports diving industry. DMAC is not funded by the AODC or any other organization that I am aware of. While Tom Hollobone acted as our secretary and worked for the AODC, most of the members work within the diving field in some capacity or they would not have the expertise or interest to be on the committee. I collected my pay cheque from the Navy but to extend that connection and state that DMAC was therefore funded by the Navy is ludicrous.

The physician members of DMAC represent virtually all major recompression centres in and around the UK as well as some in other parts of Europe. Their chambers treat the vast majority of all diving accidents that occur in the UK including military, commercial and sport divers. They have treated hundreds of divers over the last few years. If this is what Dr Wilmshurst means by "called on to treat bent amateur divers from time to time" I have the following question: How many divers with decompression sickness have you recompressed in the last few years Peter? I am amazed that Dr Wilmshurst alleges those of us who treat sport diving injuries are not involved.

Dr Wilmshurst was indeed present for DMAC's meeting in June of 1989 but he misquotes events and conversations. DMAC as a committee had discussed their concerns about events within the sports diving industry for the previous year. The draft presented at this meeting, while not on the agenda, was not a new idea. I had been assigned back to the United States and this was my final opportunity to finish any DMAC work I had in progress. The DMAC Statement on Sport Diving was completed early and presented. The draft was actively discussed by the entire committee and a final version approved. As a courtesy, Dr Wilmshurst was asked for his remarks and he expressed no negative comments about any aspect of the statement.

The DMAC statement on Sport Diving is simply a reminder of basic safety rules and concepts and was addressed to divers in all parts of the world. Dr Wilmshurst has now expressed concern about the statement but has discussed only unrelated issues. I ask him now, publicly, to be specific regarding which portions of the statement he objects to.

G H Adkisson, MD

#### Reference

- 1 Diving Medical Advisory Committee. Statement on Sports Diving. *SPUMS J* 1990; 20 (1): 57-58