



FIRST MEDICAL CREW FOR CAPE TO RIO RACE

The forthcoming Cape to Rio yacht race will see the first ever entry of a crew of medical professionals.

The skipper is Sean Cumming, a professional yachtsman and instructor from Ocean Sailing Academy in Cape Town.

The aspiring medical crew includes surgeons Geoff Fotheringham and Ray Dawson, ophthalmologist Professor Trevor Carmichael and anaesthetist Iain Gibson.

The team has already won fifth place in the Vasco da Gama race from Maputo to Durban, and came fourth in the Double Cape race off the Cape Peninsula.



The Cape to Rio yacht race is considered South Africa's most prestigious transatlantic long distance yacht race and is held every three years.

The dream of the group of medical specialists came true on 7 July last year when Investec Private Bank agreed to sponsor them with a yacht built especially for the race.

A Fast 42' Yacht was custom-built in Durban and all the components used were produced locally, including the rigging and the mast.

The dream started almost two years ago when Professor John Robbs conceived the idea of a 'medical crew' while watching the start of the Cape to Rio race from the top of Signal Hill.

The SAMJ wishes them all the very best of luck.

SAMA PROTECTS ITS GUIDE TO BILLING

SAMA's decision to charge a licence fee for the use of its *Guide to Billing for Medical Services* (formerly known as *Guide to Fees*) from 2003, was not taken lightly. Last year SAMA's Board of Directors decided to recoup the cost associated with the development and maintenance of the SAMA billing system used by the health industry.

Over the years, SAMA has expended considerable time, effort and cost in creating this billing tool. It costs approximately R9 million annually to produce including overheads for committee structures, administration, negotiations with groups and funders, research, printing and distribution.

The *Guide to Billing (GTB)* contains SAMA's suggested codes, descriptors, units, guideline fees, scale of fees for occupational injuries and diseases, and remuneration for other services rendered by practitioners. It also includes guidelines and interpretations on some items.

Although one of its objectives is to assist medical schemes to reimburse members and service providers for services rendered, SAMA cannot reasonably expect its members to further carry all the costs.

It is for this reason that SAMA requires users of the GTB and associated structures, to pay a royalty or reasonable remuneration for its use of the guide, including modified or abbreviated versions.

The GTB is also used for information, comparisons and

billing by medical schemes, hospitals and funders in the insurance industry, Compensation Commission, Life Offices Association and certain government departments.

The cost of the licence to SAMA members is R228, which includes one copy of the *2003 Guide to Billing*. The price for non-members is R3 078 per licence, including one copy of the guide. There are different categories and different charges for multiple and other users, depending on circumstances.

SAMA will use this income to develop, maintain and improve the billing system to meet reasonable demands of the industry. The money could also fund activities such as peer review and maintaining an office of a Medical Ombudsman. Health data currently collected through the billing system could also be better analysed and utilised should more funds become available.

The Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) may publish the SAMA codes with the BHF scale of benefits. However, the descriptions of the services would only be available in the SAMA Guide to Billing.

For more information, questions and answers on the SAMA Guide to Billing, visit SAMA's website on www.samedical.org (Work and Money / Private Practice / Coding and Tariffs).

Magda Naudé