

A Triad of Expertise: The Power of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Ten years ago, the whole airline industry held their breath after a pilot flew an airbus into terrain intentionally. The crash into the French alps caused many fatalities and left aviation professionals to question common practices. As a result, many regulations, on the European as well as the national level, have been released following the accident to improve safety of employees and passengers alike. In Austria, considerable effort was undertaken to ensure the meaningful involvement of all relevant stakeholders throughout the process: experienced aviation psychologists (AP) collaborate closely with Aeromedical Examiners (AMEs) and the local civil aviation authority within an interdisciplinary framework. When aviation professionals experience challenges that may adversely affect their occupational functioning, they usually either self-refer to an AP serving as their local mental health professional (MHP) or be referred by peer-support personnel or their AME. The AP serves as the primary point of contact, facilitates access to appropriate treatment, and coordinates and monitors the overall recovery process through to the individual's reintegration into the workforce. Reports from additional disciplines, such as psychiatry and clinical neuropsychology, are obtained by the AP and AME in close collaboration. The AP then integrates, contextualizes, and summarizes the relevant findings for the AME and the respective aviation authority. This close interdisciplinary collaboration may contribute to several beneficial outcomes, including fewer barriers to help-seeking and alleviating concerns regarding the potential loss of medical certification. Clearly defined standards and coordinated support may facilitate occupational retention and timely reintegration into the workforce. Furthermore, this approach may contribute to destigmatizing professional psychological support among aviation professionals and encourage earlier help-seeking, thereby facilitating timely access to appropriate support before difficulties significantly impair occupational functioning.