

MEDICINES AND DRIVING DON'T MIX



INTRODUCTION

- ⦿ Both prescription and OTC medicines can impair driving abilities
- ⦿ Illegal drugs also decreases driving abilities
- ⦿ Medicines and alcohol further decreases this driving ability

INTRODUCTION

- ⦿ While in recent years there has been much attention paid to those drivers affected by illegal drugs,
- ⦿ the fact remains that people are killed or injured because of drivers who should not be driving because of medicines they have taken too.

HOW MEDICINES CAN REDUCE DRIVING ABILITY

- ◉ With the person next to you, spend 3 minutes discussing how driving ability can be affected with medicines





City driving on a clear night – light signals, signs, other road markings and road users readily apparent.



City driving on wet night in a person with reduced visual acuity and increased light scatter in eye. Common in drivers taking medicines that can blur the vision – marked loss of clarity, road layout not visible, signs not apparent.

HOW MEDICINES CAN REDUCE DRIVING ABILITY

- **Examples include;**
 - Slower reaction time
 - Erratic, unpredictable behaviour
 - Poor concentration
 - Distorted perception
 - Blurred vision
 - Over confidence - leading to risk taking
 - Lack of self confidence
 - Tremors
 - dizziness

HOW MEDICINES CAN REDUCE DRIVING ABILITY (CONT)

◉ More examples;

- Tiredness - even the next day
- Poor coordination
- Hallucinations
- Panic attacks
- Muscle weakness
- Fainting
- Paranoia

MEDICINES AND DRIVING ABILITY

- ⦿ The effect of a medicine on driving may be more if;
 - Starting a new medicine
 - Taking two or more medicines that effect driving
 - Taking more than the prescribed limit
 - Alcohol at the same time
 - Already tired

DRIVING, MEDICINES AND THE ELDERLY

- ◉ The elderly become more susceptible to illness and injury, both these conditions may affect the ability to drive.

POSSIBLE RISKS IF AN ACCIDENT IS CAUSED

- ⦿ Lose licence
- ⦿ Lose insurance cover
- ⦿ Prosecution
- ⦿ Damaged car, property
- ⦿ Injure, disable, kill someone

WHICH MEDICINES?

- ◉ Some antidepressants
- ◉ Stronger painkillers e.g. those containing codeine or dihydrocodeine.
- ◉ Powerful tranquillisers - used for the treatment of some mental disorders.
- ◉ Some drugs used to treat epilepsy e.g. phenobarbitone and phenytoin.

WHICH MEDICINES? (CONT)

- Benzodiazepine e.g. temazepam or diazepam - commonly prescribed for anxiety or insomnia.
- Some antihistamines - used in hayfever medicines.
- Insulin and oral anti-diabetic drugs. Low blood sugar can contribute to confusion and impairment of driving ability.
- Some eye drops can cause short-term blurring of vision.

MEDICINES AND ALCOHOL

Simulator studies have provided evidence on the impairing effects on driving of therapeutic medications and recreational drugs.

Such studies have also shown how medication and OTC medicines often interact synergistically with alcohol.

WHICH CONDITIONS?

- ⊙ Hay fever
- ⊙ colds and flu
- ⊙ Epilepsy
- ⊙ Narcolepsy
- ⊙ Angina
- ⊙ Diabetes
- ⊙ Neurological conditions

DVLA

- ⦿ The DVLA advises drivers that: ‘You *must tell the DVLA* if you have ever had or currently suffer
- ⦿ The list is endless so if in doubt the driver should just inform the DVLA

PICKING UP A PRESCRIPTION OR OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE

- ⦿ It's every driver's responsibility to ensure that they are safe to drive
- ⦿ they must be sure that their ability to drive is not affected.
- ⦿ Help your patient during an MUR
- ⦿ Remember to tell them when you do NMS

SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR PATIENTS

- ⦿ Encourage your patients to;
 - ask for advice about driving
 - read the labels
 - not drink while taking drugs
 - report side effects to pharmacist or doctor
 - Practice at home with medicines first to see what affect they have
 - Remember the next morning

- ⦿ Remember to do this during MURs and NMS

SUMMARY

- ⦿ Pharmacists and technicians dispensing medicines and supplying over the counter medicines need to think about whether the patient may be at risk if they take the medicine and drive.
- ⦿ Hence we should take the opportunity to talk to the driver patient about how to take the medicine safely.

FINALLY

- ⦿ Tell your patients

*If in doubt,
don't drive.*