2012

Reply

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Publication Details

Reply

Abstract
We thank Dr Hocking for his comments on our paper.1 We agree that reliance upon on-road assessments alone is inappropriate when determining driving safety.

Keywords
reply

Disciplines
Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details
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Dear Editor,

We thank Dr Hocking for his comments on our paper.1 We agree that reliance upon on-road assessments alone is inappropriate when determining driving safety.

Although the ANZGSM position paper2 states that ‘performance on a standardised occupational therapist assessed on-road driving test is accepted as a gold standard assessment’, the claim is later qualified: ‘However, there are potential problems with safety, the liability of assessors, and the reluctance of older people with dementia to participate because of fears of licence cancellation. Moreover, while a given driving assessment can be standardised and validated, this is difficult to do across different locations’. We do not believe that a gold standard currently exists thus research is needed in the hope that one can be developed.

It is hoped that our paper highlighted the complex nature of assessing drivers with dementia. To this end we quoted an AAN practice parameter3; ‘unfortunately, there is neither a test nor a historical feature that accurately quantifies driving risk, clinicians can only make qualitative estimates of driving risk’. We also described a 14-point management strategy for GPs, and proposed that they could ‘consider an occupational therapist driver assessment referral (limited by availability and cost) which can be repeated’.

The NSW driver licensing authority requires all drivers to undergo an annual medical review from age 754. From the age of 85, drivers must undergo an on-road assessment every 2 years. However, drivers may waive this on-road assessment by accepting a modified licence.

Thus far, much of the transport safety literature concentrates upon how best we can identify unsafe older drivers. Perhaps the time has come for researchers and policy-makers to focus their efforts upon how we, as a society, can provide user-friendly alternative transport options for our senior citizens5. Our research group is currently developing a client-centred ‘decision aid’ booklet which could enable people with dementia to consider early retirement from driving.

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References


