

Health care professionals failing to tell patients they are not fit to drive

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Many healthcare professionals are failing to advise people with medical conditions that could affect their ability to drive whether they should get behind the wheel, according to research from the University of Warwick.

Researchers from the University's Warwick Medical School have found many healthcare professionals are failing to tell patients with certain conditions such as diabetes or visual impairment if they are not fit to drive.

In a study undertaken for the Department for Transport, the research team explored the knowledge and attitudes of healthcare professionals towards advising patients about their fitness to drive. The researchers recruited 1519 [health professionals](#), 358 patients and 55 medical school personnel to the study.

The research team, led by Dr Carol Hawley, Principal Research Fellow at Warwick Medical School, found doctors in training received little tuition on medical aspects of fitness to drive.

They also found that although most healthcare professionals were aware of the Driving and [Vehicle](#) Licensing Agency (DVLA) guidelines stipulating fitness to drive, many were unable to reliably distinguish between medically unfit drivers, borderline drivers and fit drivers. When presented with paper case studies of patients only 7.5% scored all of them correctly.

When presented with an acted scenario of a patient who was unfit to drive, 75% of healthcare professionals failed to offer advice on driving. The results also showed 40% of healthcare professionals agreed they did not have sufficient knowledge of the DVLA Fitness to Drive guidelines.

As part of the current DVLA licensing system there is a legal obligation on individuals to declare the onset or worsening of any [medical condition](#) that may affect their fitness to drive. This requirement is publicised on driving licence application forms and in accompanying information leaflets.

Advice for the public on the medical standards of fitness to drive is published by DVLA in a booklet and made available on Direct.gov.uk.

For medical professionals, the DVLA helped to develop the General Medical Council's new guidance on patient confidentiality and reporting medical conditions to the DVLA. There are also various projects in development such as E learning for junior doctors and the DVLA is working with the Department of Health to develop a learning module on medical conditions and driver licensing awareness.

Dr Hawley's research has been published as a main report, along with nine sub-reports, by the Department for Transport.

She said: "Although the information is there and results suggest healthcare professionals are aware of the DVLA fitness to drive guidelines, they had a poor knowledge of how the guidelines applied to specific conditions.

"There is also uncertainty about which groups of healthcare professionals are responsible for informing a patient about how their condition can affect their ability to drive. Interviews with patients revealed that only one third of them had been advised about their fitness

to drive without having to ask for advice."

Dr Hawley said the DVLA had already taken steps to ensure more widespread knowledge and implication of the current guidelines for the public and healthcare professionals. However, she added they may need to be simplified to make them more user-friendly and more training was needed for healthcare professionals and medical students.

Provided by University of Warwick

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