

Graduated drivers' licenses for seniors

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Introducing graduated drivers' licenses for seniors in Canada might help improve road safety, states an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

Although some seniors continue to be good drivers, others have [health conditions](#) such as cognitive issues and physical frailty that can affect driving ability. Currently, licences for seniors are usually restricted only after there have been traffic incidents, which can be too late to prevent injuries. In 2009, 2209 Canadians died in [motor vehicle accidents](#); of these, 389 were over age 65, a higher incidence than in any other age group. For every death, an additional 35 people were injured.

The authors propose a proactive solution that has been successful with young drivers and reduced serious road incidents by 20%–25% in this age group.

"The compelling benefits to [young drivers](#) suggest that a policy of graduated licensing for seniors also deserves serious consideration," write Drs. Donald Redelmeier, University of Toronto, and Matthew Stanbrook, Deputy Editor, [CMAJ](#). "With this approach, a full driver's licence defaults automatically to a restricted licence that allows seniors to continue to drive only under relatively favourable roadway conditions."

This system is a proactive way to help prevent injury rather than reacting after a serious traffic incident has occurred. There should be exemptions for seniors whose good health has been certified by their physician.

"Placing the onus on patients to seek a medical exemption would likely be more effective than relying on others to start discussions about medical suspension," state the authors.

"An opt-out rather than an opt-in approach to licensing is congruent with existing safety policies for aviators, vaccination programs for children and commercial driver testing," they conclude.

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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