

# Researchers find link between traffic offences and severe road trauma

April 23 2015, by Jo Manning

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Researchers from Royal Perth Hospital have completed one of the first studies to look at traffic offences as a risk factor for severe road trauma.

The comprehensive study looked at more than 10,000 RPH trauma patients over 10 years and found 60 per cent had prior [traffic](#) offences.

Led by Dr Kwok Ho, who is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Murdoch University, the study also found:

- The more demerit points, the higher the risk of subsequent trauma;

- Drink-driving, no seat belt and the use of handheld electronic devices were the main offences that led patients to suffer a [severe trauma](#);
- Three drink-driving offences led to an 80 per cent risk of severe injury requiring intensive care admission.

Dr Ho and his team also found that patients who recovered from [severe injury](#) requiring ICU admission appeared to reduce their subsequent traffic offences, but those who reoffended were more likely to be readmitted again due to road trauma.

"It appears that many road trauma injuries did not occur merely by chance; instead what we observed was a pattern of risk taking behaviours and the associated consequences," said Dr Ho.

"Young male drivers again appear to be those who are most difficult to change. Perhaps, intensive education interventions need to be targeted to those who are particularly at risk of having traffic offences leading to further road trauma."

The researchers also found that the median time between the last traffic offence and road trauma admission was relatively long at 11 months.

"This provides a window of opportunity to intervene and reduce their risk of severe road trauma," said Dr Ho.

"This window should be used to trial and evaluate injury prevention education programs, health promotion programs, the effectiveness of suspending drivers' licences at a lower level of cumulative demerit points, criminalising traffic offences or other innovative interventions."

**More information:** "The Journey from Traffic Offender to Severe Road Trauma Victim: Destiny or Preventive Opportunity?" *PLoS ONE*

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