

# Low awareness of DVLA safe driving guidelines among hospital doctors

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New research published today by *JRSM Open* concludes that medically disqualified patients may wrongly assume themselves fit to drive on discharge from hospital because of inadequate knowledge among doctors of DVLA guidelines relating to commonly occurring medical conditions. 140 junior doctors and senior house officers at six hospitals across five centres in England took part in the study which established that only 21% of doctors knew how long a patient should stop driving for after a stroke and less than 40% knew how long a person must stop driving for after a first episode of epileptic seizure. Only 15% of doctors knew when a patient can recommence driving after an acute coronary syndrome treated with elective angioplasty.

The presence of an acute or chronic medical condition increases the risk that an individual will be involved in an accident. The researchers highlighted police reports to the DVLA in 2000, which show that causes of road traffic collisions involving collapse at the wheel include epilepsy (38%), blackouts (21%), diabetics taking insulin (19%), heart condition (8%) and stroke (7%). Estimates suggest that approximately 15 in 10,000 accidents are precipitated by loss of consciousness due to an acute medical condition.

Dr Ka Ying Bonnie Ng, one of the research authors, said: "The risk of patients being involved in serious accidents decreases significantly if they are warned in [hospital](#) that they may be unfit to drive. This is a serious and widespread problem with a simple and effective solution. Doctors must inform patients about the impact of their medical

conditions on their legal status as drivers and encourage them to inform the DVLA." She added that in cases where patients refuse to contact the authorities, confidentiality must be over-ridden if there is significant risk of harm to the public.

"There is a need for increased awareness of driving restrictions for common [medical conditions](#) among hospital doctors through focused undergraduate and post-graduate education," said Dr Ng.

**More information:** K. Y. B. Ng et al. Knowledge of Driving Vehicle Licensing Agency guidelines among NHS doctors: a multicentre observational study, *JRSM Open* (2015). [DOI: 10.1177/2054270415601586](#)

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