

Can older adults with dementia continue to drive? More study is needed

October 5 2016

How do you know when it's time for an older adult with mild dementia to stop driving? Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. It can impact a person's ability to drive safely. Although all people with dementia will have to stop driving eventually, each case can be unique based on the individual. According to a new study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, we still need to explore mental or physical tests that can best predict when people with dementia should stop driving.

People with [dementia](#) are between two and eight times more likely than adults of the same age without dementia to be involved in car accidents. Since dementia makes it difficult for people to evaluate their own ability to drive safely, furthermore, the decision about when to stop driving must be based on objective tests.

To determine which kinds of tests best evaluate driving safety, researchers from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, reviewed 28 studies that investigated the relationship between driving and cognitive function in people with dementia. The study was the first of its kind to examine drivers with dementia and which existing tests might be most helpful in assessing their driver safety. The researchers reviewed studies that examined various testing methods, including mental status tests, on-road assessments, tests using computerized and simulated driving, and those using [motor vehicle crash](#) data.

The researchers determined that current testing procedures are only

about 77 percent accurate for predicting how safely people with dementia can drive. They concluded that better, more accurate testing tools are needed to assess whether or not [people](#) with dementia can continue to drive safely. In the interim, older adults and caregivers should continue to work closely with their healthcare professionals when it comes to safe driving. Doctors, nurses, social workers, and other experts can evaluate your abilities and help you transition to driver retirement when the time is right.

More information: Joanne M. Bennett et al, Cognitive Tests and Determining Fitness to Drive in Dementia: A Systematic Review, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.14180](#)

Provided by American Geriatrics Society

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