

NATIONAL OFFICE FOR TRAFFIC MEDICINE E-ZINE

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DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Dear colleagues, welcome to our first Traffic Medicine e-zine from the re-established National Office for Traffic Medicine. Now housed in the Centre for Innovative Human Systems in the School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin, the office continues the unique phenomenon of being the only Medical Advisory Board to a driver licensing authority in the world to be housed in a higher education institution.

The science and practice of medical fitness to drive is a relatively new field, and we are fortunate that the Irish healthcare professionals and transport sector have risen to the challenge with enthusiasm and wholehearted participation. Our Working Group represents almost all health care disciplines as well as input from An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority and the Department of Transport, and oversees our annual updating of the guidelines on medical fitness to drive, Sláinte agus Tiomáint, as well as our educational program. We are truly grateful for this voluntary effort from the representatives of these disciplines. Without engendering complacency, it is noteworthy that Ireland has the highest level of awareness of medical fitness to drive guidelines among general practitioners of any country in the world, and the highest levels of confidence in assessing medical fitness to drive.



To continue these high levels of engagement, practitioners, and the driving public need to be supported with high level guidelines, ongoing educational programs and research and engagement with the international community of traffic medicine. You will be able to read of some of these engagements and activities in this newsletter, and whatever your health care profession we would welcome ongoing feedback ideally through the representative of your professional discipline who is currently sitting on the working group.

- Desmond O'Neill



SLÁINTE AGUS TIOMÁINT

MEDICAL FITNESS TO DRIVE GUIDELINES



The ongoing development and delivery of the Sláinte agus Tiomáint Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines is a core objective of the Traffic Medicine programme. This year we delivered an updated version of these Guidelines (12th Ed.) which were launched on the 7th of April.

We also continued to support the RSA with responding to queries on the application of Driver Fitness rules as outlined in the Guidelines.

The launch took place in Trinity College Dublin and included a number of presentations. Please click the links below if you would like to access the presentations:

Prof Desmond O'Neill, Director of NOTM

[Presentation on Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines Updates](#)

Prof Conor Deasy, UCC/CUH Hand Clinical Lead Major Trauma Audit (MTA)

[Presentation on Major Trauma Audit \(MTA\) and Road Traffic Collisions Ireland](#)

Dr Paul Carroll, SVUH/RHD and National Rehabilitation Hospital

[Presentation on Rehabilitation and Driving](#)



Above: Pictured From left to right: Dr Paul Carroll, Chief Superintendent Jane Humphreys, Prof Conor Deasy, Ms Anne Graham, Prof Dennis Cusack, Mr Sam Waide, Dr Maggie Martin, Prof Desmond O'Neill, Michael Rowland, Deirdre Sinnott.

Right: Prof Desmond O'Neill presenting updates to the Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines



MEDICAL FITNESS TO DRIVE GUIDELINES

ONLINE COURSE


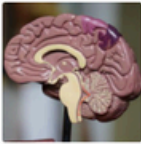



The NOTM has developed a short online course to support healthcare professionals in familiarising themselves with the guidelines and updates. This course is accredited by the RCPI and offers 3 CPD points. It has been designed to allow participants to begin their study at a time convenient to them, without the need for adhering to strict start dates.

The course aims to assist doctors and other healthcare professionals in:

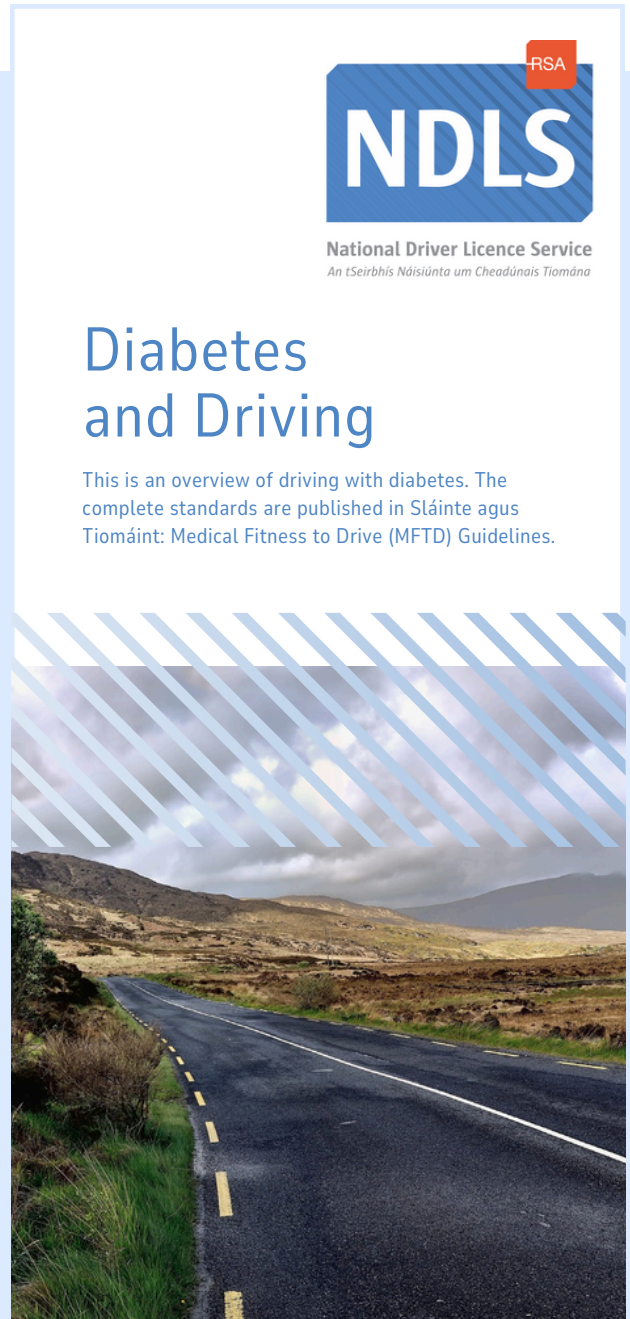
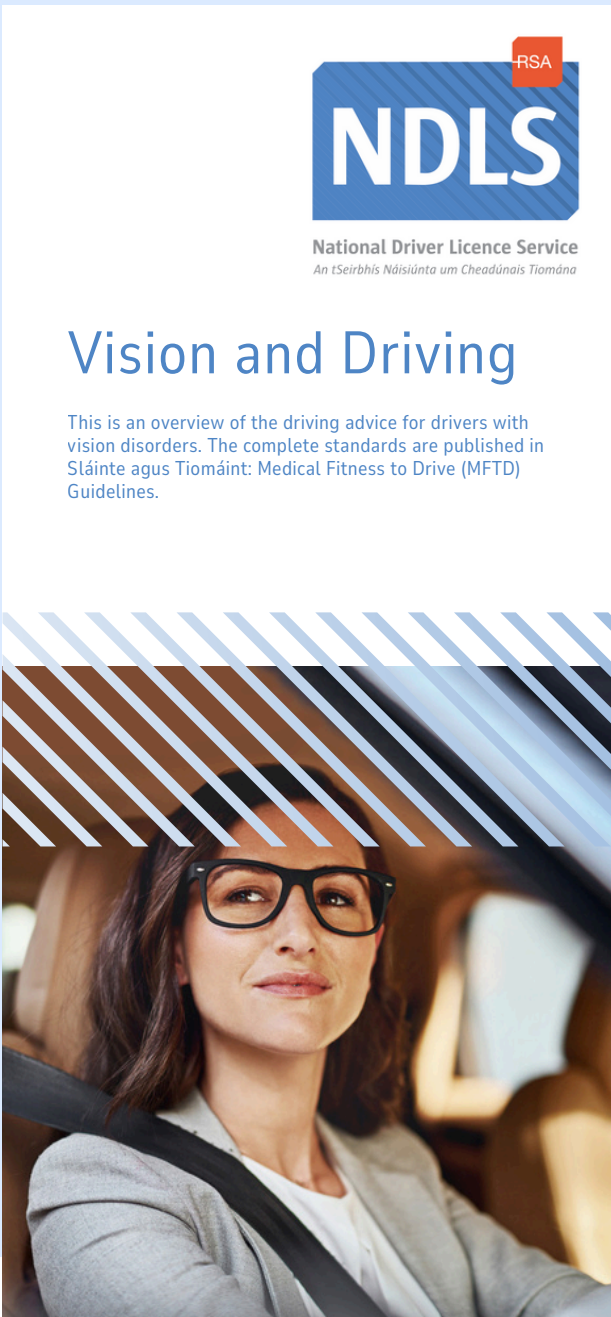
- Advising their patients on fitness to drive
- Understanding the requirements for reporting to the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS)
- Reviewing the stability, progression or improvement of patient conditions

Further information on the Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines course can be found on [our website](#), where you will also find a link to [register for the online course](#).

Module Content

	Chapter 1: Introduction The Reading material is an optional Resource. The Quiz is mandatory and you must achieve a grade of 80% in order to proceed to the next Chapter.
	Chapter 2: Neurological Disorders The Reading material is an optional Resource. The Quiz is mandatory and you must achieve a grade of 80% in order to proceed to the next Chapter.
	Chapter 3: Cardiovascular Disorders The Reading material is an optional Resource. The Quiz is mandatory and you must achieve a grade of 80% in order to proceed to the next Chapter.
	Chapter 4: Diabetes Mellitus The Reading material is an optional Resource. The Quiz is mandatory and you must achieve a grade of 80% in order to proceed to the next Chapter.
	Chapter 5: Psychiatric Disorders The Reading material is an optional Resource. The Quiz is mandatory and you must achieve a grade of 80% in order to proceed to the next Chapter.

The NOTM also works to provide information and increased understanding of how health impacts driving to members of the public through informational leaflets, which can be found at [this link](#).



NDLS DRIVING LEAFLETS

We have updated the Diabetes and Vision leaflets as per the new 2025 medical fitness to drive guidelines. We are currently working to develop a new information leaflet on rehabilitation and driving.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Another core commitment of the NOTM is to provide ongoing education and CPD courses on medical fitness to drive and road safety and mobility.

CLINICAL UPDATE IN TRAFFIC MEDICINE 2024

The Clinical Update in Traffic Medicine took place on Wednesday 27th of November 2024 with a focus on respiratory and sleep medicine, occupational therapy, gerontology, and older people, transport and driving. Speakers on the day were Prof Walter McNicholas, Prof Desmond O'Neill, Prof Charles Musselwhite and Dr Tadhg Stapleton.

This event was very well received with 105 people in attendance throughout. The programme can be found at [this link](#), and presentations can be found at the links below:

Prof Walter McNicholas
[Presentation](#)

Prof Desmond O'Neill
[Presentation](#)

Prof Charles Musselwhite
[Presentation](#)

Dr Tadhg Stapleton
[Presentation](#)



TRAFFIC MEDICINE WEBINAR 2025

The National Office for Traffic Medicine hosted an RCPI-accredited 5 CPD point webinar on Traffic Medicine on the 16th of May 2025 with 115 people in attendance. The course ran from 9:30 to 15:15 covering updates on neurological disorders, diabetes, visual disorders, dementia, alcohol and drugs and driving. It also provided an overview of on and off-road driving assessment, along with a public health perspective on medical fitness to drive.

Speakers on the day were Professor Desmond O'Neill, Professor Denis Cusack, Dr Tadhg Stapleton, Dr Karen O'Connell, Dr Hannah Forde, Dr Mary Jo Ryan and Dr Michael Hanrahan. Links to their presentations can be found below:

[Dementia & Driving](#)
Prof Desmond O'Neill

[Alcohol & Drugs Driving](#)
Prof Denis A. Cusack

[Diabetes & Driving](#)
Dr Hannah Forde

[Neurological Disorders & Driving](#)
Dr Karen O'Connell

[Visual Disorders & Driving](#)
Dr Mary Jo Ryan

[Public Health Perspective](#)
Dr Michael Hanrahan

[On and Off-Road Driving Assessment](#)
Dr Tadhg Stapleton

MARY WARD ESSAY COMPETITION

The NOTM continues to provide education and support to colleges and institutions providing medical training. The Mary Ward Essay Competition attracted many high-quality entries from students attending six colleges (NUIG, RCSI, TCD, UCC, UCD and UL).

Students were instructed to write an essay on the topic of “Is there a role for healthcare professionals in addressing alcohol, drugs and driving?”. First prize was €500 in both the undergraduate and postgraduate categories, with runners up winning €200 and €100. The winners were announced at the launch of the guidelines.



*Runner Up Undergraduate winner,
Sarah Kennedy*



*First Prize Postgraduate winner,
Madhushree Bengaluru Nanjunda Aradhya*

Winners	Category	Affiliation	Place
Ellen Ni Chinseallaigh	Undergrad	UCC	1
Sarah Kennedy	Undergrad	TCD	2
Oliver Burke	Undergrad	UCG	3
Madhushree Bengaluru Nanjunda Aradhya	Postgrad	UCD	1

>>>Note that this competition will commence again with registration opening in October 2025, please check in with the [NOTM webpage](#) and social media for further updates.

COLLABORATION WITH



The International Commission
for Driver Testing

We continue to collaborate with CIECA with Prof O'Neill appointed Chair of the European Working Group on Medical Fitness to Drive. On the 17th of March 2025, Professor Desmond O'Neill presented the Irish research on alcohol ignition interlocks and rehabilitation at the CIECA 'Alcohol Ignition Interlocks and ADAS from a Fitness-to-Drive Perspective' workshop. He also attended the congress in Porto 27- 30 May 2025 and is currently formulating a response to 4th Directive.

The 4th Driving Licence Directive aims to modernise driving licence rules to both make roads safer and also simplify the daily lives of citizens, for example by introducing a digital driving licence that is valid throughout the EU.

ADVANCING STANDARDS FOR MEDICAL FITNESS TO DRIVE IN EUROPE

Traffic medicine is a relatively young discipline in healthcare with a relatively modest presence in the research literature and educational curricula of healthcare professions. An important focus for further development of guidelines on medical fitness to drive derives from the European Union work on the directives on medical fitness to drive.

These have covered areas such as diabetes, vision, epilepsy, obstructive sleep apnea and cardiac conditions. The regulations in each case were informed by a standalone panel of experts of high quality. However, there is currently no permanent working group of clinical experts in place to keep the European Commission informed of advances in research in medical fitness to drive in terms of future updates of the directives.

Into this breach has been a series of useful interventions by CIECA, the international organization of driver assessment organizations (<https://www.cieca.eu/>). Assembling an expert working group for fixed purpose, CIECA produced useful guidelines on the process for assessing disabled drivers, as well as an overview of the existing European directives and advice on their further development (<https://www.cieca.eu/node/959>).

In addition, CIECA has set up a permanent working group on fitness to drive with membership proposed by membership organizations of experts in the area. Ireland is represented in CIECA by the Road Safety Authority and I am its representative on the working group, and have subsequently been accepted as its chair. The working group arranges meetings on topics relevant to medical fitness to drive, most recently in March of this year when I presented online to a meeting in Berlin focusing on both alcohol use disorders and driving as well as assisted driving technology.

Our current work is to address the potential opportunities and changes arising from the provisional new European directive and on behalf of the working group I presented these at the CIECA annual conference in Porto at the end of May. Much of the advice parallels the developments in traffic medicine in Ireland through the National Office for Traffic Medicine, including itemized self-declaration by drivers and license application and renewal, regularly updated evidence based guidelines for health care practitioners, public education and health care education and COPD. In addition, the working group has also recommended that the European Commission should set up a permanent working group to advise on medical fitness to drive similar to the working group of the National Office for Traffic Medicine.

- Desmond O'Neill

CONFERENCES



US TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD

Every January in Washington DC, the largest international meeting on transportation takes place. The [Transportation Research Board](#) is a branch of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States. The TRB Annual Meeting covers all transportation modes and attracts policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and academia. It attracts more than 13,000 attendees each year from throughout the United States and across the world, and is the single largest gathering of transportation practitioners and researchers in the world.

From the perspective of traffic medicine, it is also the meeting place for practitioners and driver licensing authorities predominantly from the United States but also with an international flavour. It has been particularly beneficial for the development of policy and the presentation of research on road safety, human factors, and medical fitness to drive. There are also useful committees for a specific deliberation, including alcohol and substance use disorders, public health and transportation, and older drivers.

I have been attending these meetings for over 20 years, and the outputs possible from such a multidisciplinary meeting have been very helpful in formulating policies and procedures. For example, I have been involved a very useful guide to transportation in an aging society [1], as well as academic papers advising staff in licensing authorities, many of whom do not have access to medical advisory boards in the United States, on how their licensing processes can be attuned to emerging research on older drivers [2].

An aspect of particular interest is that of autonomous vehicles and it has been useful for me to be able to engage with licensing authorities in jurisdictions which currently licensed autonomous vehicles. Of interest, in terms of both ordering a self-driving vehicle as well as the issue of dealing with untoward events, breakdowns, or crashes, these jurisdictions currently maintain the same medical fitness to drive regulations as for ordinary cars.

CONTINUED...

A particularly helpful aspect of the broad reach of the meeting is the ability to maintain a strong emphasis on preserving transportation, including through alternative transport modes [3]. In addition, broader concerns such as planning laws may have a key aspect in preservation of pedestrian safety.

While the recent changes in funding and direction of National Research institutes in the United States such as the TRB Indicate changes to such valuable meetings and how they are organized and funded, it is encouraging that the TRB has posted notices seeking submissions for the January 2026 meeting.

- Prof Desmond O'Neill

[1] O'Neill D, Dobbs B. Age-Related disease, Mobility and Driving, in Transportation in an Aging Society, A Decade of Experience, Washington DC, Transportation Research Board, 2004, 56 - 68.

[2] Langford J, Braitman K, Charlton J, Eberhard J, O'Neill D, Staplin L, Stutts J. TRB Workshop 2007: Licensing authorities' options for managing older driver safety--practical advice from the researchers. Traffic Inj Prev 2008;9(4) 2008:278-281.

[3] O'Neill D, Romer D, Walshe E, Winston K, Transport, health and aging: a novel approach to healthy longevity with benefits across the lifespan., National Academy of Medicine Perspectives, 2019 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8406591/>

RSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

We attended the [RSA Annual Conference 2025](#) on the 11th of June this year in Dublin. This year's conference looked at the theme of 'Driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs'.

Speakers came from around the country and from abroad to share their research into the impact of impaired driving and best practice in addressing this issue.



During the conference, Prof Desmond O'Neill delivered a [presentation on alcohol and driving](#).

Additionally, the NOTM had a stand throughout the conference to engage with road safety stakeholders and the public.



Top Right: Mr Antonio Avenoso, Prof Denis Cusack, Ms Robyn Robertson, Prof Desmond O'Neill, and Ms Anneliese Heeren.

Above: Prof Desmond O'Neill delivering his speech on alcohol and driving.

Right: Mr Sam Waide, Prof Desmond O'Neill, Ms Anneliese Heeren, Ms Anne Graham, and Ms Robyn Robertson

HEPS 2025 CONFERENCE



HEPS | 2025

Healthcare Systems Ergonomics And Patient Safety

The conference for Healthcare Ergonomics & Patient Safety (HEPS) took place in Trinity College Dublin, Ireland from 18th - 20th June 2025, under the overarching theme of “Safe Better Healthcare By All For All”. This conference focused on highlighting current challenges and emerging trends in the field of human factors and ergonomics.



In attendance there were 12 patient partners, and 111 healthcare leaders, 29 HFE practitioners, 95 HFE Academics, 35 early career HFE researchers and 22 service providers from 30 countries around the world.

The HEPS 2025 Conference also has a dedicated website (heps2025.com), where you can find all of the [pictures](#), [presentation slides](#), [posters](#) and [videos](#) from the event.

The NOTM were present at the conference to highlight medical fitness to drive and traffic medicine to those in attendance. Overall, it was very successful, with considerable interest and engagement from the international audience.

Right: Dr Maggie Martin and Natalia Timulakova at the NOTM stand at HEPS 2025





PUBLIC OUTREACH

As part of ongoing commitment to educating the public and raising awareness on medical conditions and how they may impact driving, the NOTM will have a stand at the Ploughing Championships.




RESEARCH

Irish Journal of Medical Science (2023) 192:2487–2493
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11845-023-01301-0

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Medical fitness to drive, emergency service vehicles and crash risk

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Abstract

Background Emergency service vehicle (ESV) drivers are an important part of the health, fire and police services. ESV driving is associated with increased crash risk, but little guidance exists in the literature on relevant medical conditions among drivers and their potential for adding to higher crash risks.

Aims We undertook a narrative review to examine the role of medical and other conditions in crash risk of ESV drivers. **Method** A literature search was conducted using the ScienceDirect and Transport Research International Documentation (TRID) databases. There was no time frame for the search, and results were restricted to review and research articles.

Results Of 570 papers identified, 13 remained after screening and full-text review. A range of factors have been shown to have an impact on increased crash risk, including the nature of the task, physical features of the equipment, training, experience, environmental conditions and secondary tasks. There was scant information on medical conditions other than alcohol use disorders.

Conclusions Given issues of speed, vehicle and environment, it would seem prudent to mandate levels of medical fitness to drive similar to and sometimes exceeding (i.e. colour blindness for traffic signals and alerts, hearing impairment as first responders) those for group 2 drivers with extra stipulations relating to specific service needs such as enhanced visual (such as colour blindness and contrast sensitivity) and auditory function. Further research is needed on the prevalence and emergence of relevant medical conditions among ESV drivers, with due consideration of their application to the driving tasks in each service.

Keywords Automobile driving · Crashes · Emergency responders · Risk assessment · Traffic

Introduction and aim

Emergency service vehicle (ESV) or blue light drivers are an important part of the public health, fire and police services. In many countries, including Ireland, members of the police, ambulance services and fire brigades are not bound by road traffic legislation (such as speed limits and adherence to traffic signals) when driving in the performance of their duties where such use does not endanger the safety of road users.

They are at the front line in responding to accidents and emergency situations. The unique circumstances in which

blue light driving occurs are challenging and arguably heighten the crash risk for blue light drivers as compared with driving in personal and other occupational situations [1]. It has been well documented that driving poses a "hidden risk" to ESV personnel [2], and drivers of ambulances, police cars and fire engines are at risk of serious injury and death after a crash [3]. In Finland, occupational disability risk for paramedics is 2.4% compared with the national average of 1.7% [4]. Statistics from the USA indicate that occupational fatalities amongst ESV drivers are 2.5 times higher than the national average with almost three-quarters of these caused by traffic-related accidents [5]. Figures from Australia suggest ambulance personnel have an occupational fatality rate six times the national average, with 85% of fatalities attributed to crashes [5].

The additional crash risk associated with ESV driving highlights the importance of assessing medical fitness to drive and ESV drivers. A background to such concerns is that of the fitness of personnel in emergency services—in

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The full list of our publications can be found on our website: www.rsa.ie/notm

TRAFFIC INJURY PREVENTION
2023, VOL. 27, NO. 6, 365–370
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Check for updates

Perceptions and attitudes toward risk and personal responsibility in the context of medical fitness to drive

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Although there is a considerable body of literature probing the knowledge and awareness of doctors of guidelines on medical fitness to drive, little is known of knowledge and awareness of such guidelines among the general public. We investigated awareness, perceptions and attitudes among a range of adults toward risk and personal responsibility in the context of medical fitness to drive.

Methods: This quasi-experimental between groups study assessed response differences between healthcare (33%) and non-healthcare professionals. Five hundred and fourteen adults ($n = 342$) completed a 15-item online survey, which assessed their license status, direct and second-hand experience with key medical conditions, perceptions of risk, driving intentions if advised to stop driving by a doctor and beliefs about responsibility for ensuring driver fitness.

Results: Most of the participants had a driver license. Although the majority (87%) had no first-hand experience with key medical conditions contained in the Irish medical fitness to drive guidelines, two-thirds knew someone with at least one of these conditions. No participant admitted to an alcohol or drug misuse/dependence problem. Alcohol misuse/dependence and fatigue/chronic sleep loss were perceived as the greatest crash risk for drivers and for vulnerable road users. Risk perceptions in general public and the medical professionals were similar for most conditions but where they differed, the medical professionals perceived lower risk. Most respondents indicated that they would cease driving immediately if advised by their doctor for temporary and long-term conditions. No effects of age, gender, experience with medical conditions or professional status were noted on perceived intentions to cease driving. Perceptions about who is responsible for ensuring people are fit to drive fell into two categories. Drivers were perceived as chiefly responsible where alcohol, non-prescription drugs, fatigue and age were factors and doctors were identified as responsible in cases of diabetes, epilepsy, stroke, heart conditions and physical disabilities.

Conclusions: These results suggest that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the risks posed by medical and other factors that reduce driver capability and also about drivers' responsibility to ensure that they are fit to drive and thus improve road safety.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 May 2023
Accepted 5 May 2023

KEYWORDS


Road safety; medical conditions; driver responsibility; crash risk; perceptions; attitudes; behavioral intentions

Introduction

Driving is and always has been inherently dangerous. The World Health Organization (WHO) characterized road traffic crashes (RTCs) as a "hidden epidemic" because they constitute a growing but overlooked threat to human health. Although the rise in traffic casualties shows signs of slowing recently, the WHO (2015) estimated that more than 1.2 million people die each year as a result of RTCs, a leading cause of death globally. This imposes considerable economic and social burdens: the value of preventing all reported collisions in the EU was calculated at around 270 billion Euro in 2015, almost double the annual European Union (EU) budget (Wijnen et al. 2017).

Much effort has been expended in investigating the causes of RTCs and in devising appropriate remedies. As human factors play a key role in 95% of all crashes (Treat et al. 1980), efforts to improve road safety have focused on tackling the human contribution to road safety. One element of note is the potential impact of medical conditions on crash susceptibility (Charlton et al. 2010).

While there is growing literature on medical aspects of fitness to drive from the perspective of healthcare professionals (Rappoport et al. 2015), a neglected aspect is that of knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of the general public toward medical fitness to drive (MFTD). This study aims to investigate these elements of road safety in the context of the Safe System approach, the predominant paradigm

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Associate Editor Matthew J. Reed oversaw the review of this article.

¹Supplemental data for this article is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/15389584.2023.1766684>

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TRAFFIC MEDICINE EVENTS 2025

This list is not exhaustive and will be updated on a regular basis. Please check our [website](#) for the latest updates.

NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

16-18 SEPTEMBER 2025

The National Ploughing Championships is an outdoor agricultural show that incorporates a ploughing contest. This year, it will be held in Screggan, Tullamore, County Offaly. The NOTM will have a stand at this show to engage with the public.

MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM DRIVING TO NOT DRIVING - CPD WEBINAR

16 OCTOBER 2025

Details of this event, including the agenda and registration, will be shared on our website, social media and email list closer to the time. Our website can be found at [this link](#).

WORKING GROUP MEETING

13 NOVEMBER 2025

Our bi-annual working group meeting will take place on the 13th of November.

STEERING GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING

20 NOVEMBER 2025

Our bi-annual steering group committee meeting will take place on the 20th of November.

