Justice Speakers Institute

Speaking, Teaching & Training - Worldwide
The New Driving Impairment/ Conditions That Affect Aging Drivers

Judge Brian Mackenzie (Ret)
Justice Speakers Institute
Not all senior drivers are dangerous
• Light. The older you are, the more light you need to drive. To see well, a 60 year old needs 10X as much light as a 19-year-old.
• Colors. Colors, especially red, get harder to see as you age. Older drivers take 2X as long to see the flash of brake lights as younger drivers.
• Focus. Focus declines as you age. Younger drivers need only about 2 seconds to adjust their focus. Drivers over age 40 need 3 seconds or more.

• Depth perception. As a person ages, vision gets weaker, particularly side vision and depth perception.
The good news

- Drivers age over 70 had bigger declines in fatal crash rates per licensed drivers vehicle miles traveled than middle-aged drivers, ages 35-54

http://www.iii.org/issue-update/older-drivers
Older drivers have higher rates of fatal crashes, based on miles driven, than any other group except young drivers.

http://www.iii.org/issue-update/older-drivers
http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/older-drivers/qanda
The Bad news

- Starting in 2011, 10,000 Boomers turned 65 every day.
- By the year 2020, 40 million Americans over the age of 70 will be driving.

https://search.usa.gov/search/docs?utf8=%E2%9C%93&affiliate=dot-fhwa&dc=2556&query=%22highway+statistics%22+2010/
http://www.iii.org/issue-update/older-drivers
Seniors and RX Drugs

- As many as 17% of older adults abuse alcohol or Rx drugs
- 17-23% of drugs prescribed to older adults are benzodiazepines that interact negatively with alcohol
- 83% of people >65 use Rx medications, 16.9 million use tranquilizers

“Substance Abuse Among Older Adults,” (TIP #26), CSAT, SAMHSA (1998)
Seniors and RX Drugs

- People between ages 57 to 85 average at least five prescriptions
- less than 1/3 acknowledged awareness of the potential impact on driving performance.
Seniors and Addiction

• The problem is underestimated, under-identified, under-diagnosed and under-treated.

• DSM-IV criteria for “alcohol dependence” may not be adequate for older adults.
Seniors and impairment

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“Substance Abuse Among Older Adults,” (TIP #26), CSAT, SAMHSA (1998)
Seniors and alcohol

• One alcoholic drink per day assuming
• No contraindication with Rx medicine
• Not an alcoholic or in recovery

“Substance Abuse Among Older Adults,” (TIP #26), CSAT, SAMHSA (1998)
Seniors and Alcoholism

• A primary chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial and environmental manifestations

• Expanded for the elderly: “drinking behavior that becomes problematic because of physiological and psychological changes that occur with aging, including increased sensitivity to alcohol effects.”
Seniors and Alcohol

- 41 million adults age 50+ use alcohol
- Alcoholics 60 and older drink more than 40 alcoholic drinks a week on average, compared to between 25 and 35 drinks a week on average under 60.
Seniors and Illicit Drugs

- Between 2002 and 2006, illicit drug usage rates for people in their 50s has significantly increased (76%) from 3.4% to 6.0%.
- In the US the number of problem drug users over 50 is projected to rise from 1.7 million in 2000 to 4.4 million by 2020.

Sources: 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), SAMHSA
Philippa Roxby, "Ageing drug addicts face chronic health problems," BBC News (9-11-10)
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Seniors and illicit drugs

• 1997 - 2008, the rate of hospital admissions for conditions related to prescription medications and illicit drug use rose by 96 percent among people ages 65 - 84.

http://seniordriving.aaa.com/resources-family-friends/conversations-about-driving/facts-research/
• Per mile traveled, fatal crash rates increase beginning at age 70 and rise sharply after age 80.
• Since older drivers are more fragile, their fatality rates are 17 times higher than those of 25- to 64-year-olds.
A new senior driving test
Thank you for your kind Attention

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