Educating Healthcare Providers:

The Implications for Driver Safety & Consumer Education

Presenter:
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The Challenge:

Appreciating the joy of driving…
.....as well as the danger to others
Effects of Aging on Driving Skills
Effects of Aging on Driving Skills

Physical
- Decreased strength
- Decreased joint flexibility
- Decreased sensation
- Decreased coordination
- Increased likelihood of falls

Effects on Driving
- Slower response speed on foot pedals
- Difficulty moving foot between accelerator/brake
- Hitting the wrong pedal, or pressing on floor of vehicle
- Reduced steering ability; poor lane control
- Difficulty making sharp turns
- Decreased scanning/observation of traffic
Effects of Aging on Driving Skills

Vision

– Decreased acuity
– Decreased visual fields
– Decreased depth perception
– Sensitivity to glare

Effects on Driving

– Difficulty in low light/bright light conditions
– Poor lane control
– Misjudges speed of oncoming traffic
– May miss items/events in visual field deficits
– Difficulty reading signs, traffic lights
Effects of Aging on Driving Skills

Spatial Skills
- Poor judgment of angles, size, orientation
- Difficulty estimating distance, closing speed

Effects on Driving
- Poor lane control, incorrect use of lane
- Difficulty judging safe gaps in traffic
- Difficulty estimating speed of oncoming vehicles
- Unsafe turns, merges, lane changes
- Difficulty with parking
Effects of Aging on Driving Skills

Cognition
- Difficulty with sustained attention
- Decreased memory
- Impaired judgment
- Decreased problem solving
- Decreased information processing speed

Effects on Driving
- Route finding deficits
- Slow response time to traffic
- Difficulty following rules of the road
- Ineffective/lack of compensation strategies
- Creation of hazardous situations for self and others
- Greater crash risk w/ serious injury or death
- May continue to drive despite invalid license
Reportable Medical Conditions – Maryland

- Diabetes that has caused a low blood sugar episode requiring assistance from another person in the last 6 months;
- Epilepsy;
- Seizure;
- A heart condition that has caused a loss of consciousness in the past 6 months;
- Stroke;
- A condition that causes you to have dizzy spells, fainting, or blackouts;
- Sleep apnea or narcolepsy;
- A history of traumatic brain injury;
• A condition that causes weakness, shaking, or numbness in the arms, hands, legs, or feet that may affect your ability to drive;
• A hand, arm, foot, or leg that is absent, amputated, or has a loss of function that may affect your ability to drive;
• A problem which prevents a corrected minimum visual acuity of 20/70 in at least one eye or binocular field of vision of at least 110 degrees;
• Alcohol use problem;
• Drug use problem;
• A mental health condition that may affect your ability to drive;
• Schizophrenia;
• Dementia.
Warning Signs of Driving Impairment

• Frequent at-fault crashes or near-misses
• Difficulty using accelerator or brake pedals
• Stopping for a green light or in traffic unnecessarily
• Becoming lost in familiar areas
• Driving on the wrong side of the road
• Difficulty changing lanes or merging
• Other drivers frequently sound their horn
• Family members express concern
Management Strategies for Older Drivers

- Driving Skills refresher training (AARP, AAA, etc.)
- Attend a CarFit event
- Drive during low traffic volume times of day
- Plan route to avoid challenging driving situations
- Discuss concerns with your family, physician
- Try an alternative transportation option
- Remember - Safety is the priority
Management Strategies for Families

- Have frequent discussions about driving safety with the older driver and with your family members
- Encourage your family member to see his/her physician regularly
- Consider obtaining a driving evaluation for your family member
- Have an alternative transportation plan
Management strategies for the health care professional

- Initiate the discussion about driving with your patient
- Obtain continuing education about medical conditions and driving
- Know the state regulations and reportable conditions
- Consider a driving evaluation
Driver Rehabilitation

- Clinical and on-road assessment
- Impartial
- Evidence based
- MVA Review
- Evaluation/training with adaptive driving equipment
- Refresher skills training
- Provide information on transportation alternatives
Thank you!

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