Dominican University of California

From the SelectedWorks of Ruth Ramsey

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Older Driver Safety

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Drive On!
The Older and Wiser Driver

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Driving Self-Assessment

- How did you do?
- What are the next steps?
- What else do you want to know?
- Let's get started!
Introduction: Scope of Issue

- 199 million registered drivers in the US.
- 31 million over the age of 65 (CDC, 2010).
- 15% of Marin co residents are over 65.
- Most drive their own cars.
Driving as an IADL

- People want and need to drive.
- Makes out-of-home activities accessible.
- Important for social interaction.
- Promotes community mobility.
- Helps people get to volunteer jobs.
- Keeps people engaged in “meaningful occupations”.

Age–related issues and driving

- Visual impairments
- Cognitive impairments
- Medication Use
- Age–related physical issues
  - Arthritis
  - High blood pressure
  - Heart conditions
  - Hip fractures
  - Knee replacements
  - Anxiety and depression
Risks to older drivers

- Crash rates for older drivers are on the rise.
- Fatal crash rates increase starting at age 75 and increase notably after age 80.
- Older drivers are more prone to serious injury after a crash.
- Older drivers have problems with left turns, intersections, and lane changes.
Older Drivers: True or False?

- Older drivers are in more crashes.
- Older drivers change their driving habits as they age.
- Older drivers are less likely to wear seat belts.
- People over 80 should stop driving.
- Public safety is improved by getting older drivers off the road.
- Improving roads for older drivers is cost-effective.
Becoming a Safer Driver

- Adaptive Driving Strategies
  - Vision
  - Cognition
- Fitness
- Medications
- Ergonomics
- Adaptive Devices
Safer Driving: Vision

- Get regular eye exams
- Drive only during daylight hours
- Turn head frequently for better peripheral vision
- Keep headlights mirrors, windshields clean
- Adjust your seat height as needed
- Add a large rearview mirror
- Scan the road ahead
Safer Driving: Cognition

- Leave more room for the car in front
- Avoid left turns when possible
- Eliminate distractions: radio, conversations
- Plan and review your route ahead of time
- Avoid freeways, take familiar roads
- Drive at slower times of day (not rush hour)
Safer Driving: Fitness

- Stay physically fit
- Walk 20 minutes per day
- Practice stretching and flexibility exercises
- Stay mentally fit with puzzles, games
- Learn a new hobby
Primary issue is drowsiness or distraction
Worst are pain meds, tranquilizers, sleep meds, antidepressants, cough medicines, antihistamines, decongestants
Avoid driving when using these
Avoid driving when stopping or starting medication
Discuss with doctor or pharmacist
Don’t drive when drowsy!
Safer Driving Ergonomics

- Make sure your car fits your body.
- Adjust seat, mirrors, seatbelt as needed.
- If you need a cushion, get one for car use.
- Adaptive equipment is available.
- Make sure you install and use it properly.
Adaptive Driving Aids

- Key holder
- Swivel seat (for passenger)
- Gas cap turner
- Seat belt extender
- Car caddie
- Pedal extender
- Long rearview mirror
Safer Driving Courses

- 55 Alive: AARP
- Road Wise Review: AAA
- California Mature Drivers Course: DMV
- Private Driving Instructors
Giving up the keys

- Sometimes driving cessation is required
- Signs that indicate a need to stop driving
  - Has driving performance diminished?
  - Is it harder to concentrate?
  - Is vision getting worse?
  - Are you getting lost frequently?
  - Are other drivers honking at you?
  - Have family or others expressed concern?
Alternatives to Driving

- Recognize it as a loss
- Move to a location with transportation
- Enlist friends and neighbors to drive
- Hire a college student
- Take a taxi or the bus
- Walk or ride a bike
- Order online!
OT’s understand how the ability to move about our community affects quality of life.
OT’s have the skills to evaluate an individual's overall ability to operate a vehicle safely.
OT’s help individuals make the transition from driving to using other forms of transportation to maintain safe community mobility.
OT’s help people maintain their autonomy, independence, and sense of worth.
Resources for Safer Driving Info

- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Automobile Association
- American Association of Retired Persons
- National Highway Transportation Safety Administration
- American Society on Aging
- California Highway Patrol
- Department of Motor Vehicles
“Old People Driving”

- New movie
- featured in SF Chronicle, 12/6/10
- Made by Shaleece Haas
- Available at www.oldpeopledrivingmovie.com.
Questions?
Drive On! (safely)