DUKE DEMENTIA FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Caregiver Connections
An Educational Webinar Series With The Experts

The presentation will begin shortly. Thank you for your patience!

dukefamilysupport.org
919-660-7510
The Road Ahead: A Discussion about Comprehensive Driving Evaluation

Presented by:
Melissa Werz, OTD, OTR/L, DRS
Discussion Will Include:

• How *mild cognitive impairment* (MCI) and *dementia* impact driving
• *Warning signs* to stop driving or get an evaluation
• How to *discuss* driving concerns with a loved one
• *Before, during* and *after* of a driving evaluation
• Who is notified of the *results* of the driving evaluation
• What happens if someone continues to drive when it has been recommended that they *stop driving*
Unique Challenges

• Driving is a *privilege*

• *Public safety*

• Self-rating of driving ability is *not accurate*
  – *Family/caregiver’s rating* is often an *accurate predictor* of medical fitness to drive.

• *May not recognize changes*

• Thoughtful *planning*
Warning Signs

- *Family reports concerns* to medical provider
- *History of accident/crashes/fender benders*
- Need *reminders* on how to get to familiar places
- *Failing* to observe traffic signs
- Making slow or *poor decisions* in traffic
- Driving too slow or fast for road conditions
- Agitation/periods of confusion
- *Confusing* the brake and gas pedals
- *Poor lane control*

Cognition

• Driving *Implications*:
  – Ability to *recognize* traffic conditions and destinations
  – Ability to *process* information and make *appropriate* decisions in a *timely* manner
  – Ability to *understand* and operate own vehicle
  – Ability to *recall directions* and routes

Hill, et al., 2019
Physical Function

- Strength
- Sensation
- Range of motion
- Gross/fine motor skills
- Balance
- Endurance
- Neck flexibility
- Mobility
- Managing mobility device
- Hearing loss

Rapid Pace walk test: Scores >9 seconds may be indicative of decreased driving ability.

Hill, et al., 2019
Physical Function: Reaction Time

• **Motor control**
  – Activating pedals and steering
  – Applying even pressure and maintaining speed

• **Vision**
  – Scanning

• **Cognition**
  – Divided attention
  – Memory
  – Cognitive processing
Vision

90% of all sensing clues while driving come through the eyes

• Driving implications:
  – Ability to see
    • other vehicles
    • Traffic signals/signs
    • Lane markings
    • Road conditions
    • Pedestrians
    • Equipment and controls

Korner-Bitensky, et al., 2000
Other Considerations

• Obstructive sleep apnea (CPAP compliance)
• Seizures
• Diabetes (peripheral neuropathy, retinopathy)
• Cerebrovascular disease
• Cardiovascular disease (syncope)
• Psychiatric disease
• Eye diseases
  – Glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration
Medications

Polypharmacy increases potential for side effects that can impact driving

• Medications that alter consciousness require special attention

• New medications and dose adjustments should be reviewed carefully for efficacy and adverse effects

Hill, et al., 2019
“We Need to Talk”

• Start the conversation in the **early stages of the disease**
  – Understand that this may be the **first of many** conversations about driving
  – Consider an **objective** third party evaluation
  – Discuss **specific symptoms** that may impair driving; slow response time, gait instability, memory loss
  – Reinforce **medical diagnoses and legal liability**.
  – Driving skills **progressively decline** over time, recommend frequent re-assessment (**every 6 months**)
When the Conversation Does NOT Go Well

• Be *patient*
• Demonstrate *understanding* & *empathy*
• **Acknowledge** the pain of the change
• Consider an *objective* third party evaluation
• As a last resort, remove keys, disable car or remove vehicle completely
  – Be sure to provide safe, reliable, alternative transportation
Objective Third Party Evaluation

- **Occupational Therapy Comprehensive Community Mobility Evaluation**

- 2-3 hour evaluation performed by an occupational therapist/certified driving rehab specialist

- Provides an objective measurement as related to crash risk

- Cost: $200 for clinical

- Medical provider referral
OT Clinical Assessment

• Assesses Four Areas of Driving
  – Physical
  – Cognition
  – Vision
  – Reaction time
Possible Outcomes

• Return to driving with *NO* restrictions
• Return to driving *WITH* restrictions
• Referral to an *on-road* driving evaluation
• *Discontinue* driving
Results

• **Reports** shared with:
  – *Referring* physician
  – *Patient/Family* members

• OT is **NOT** permitted to share results with NC DMV (unless they were referred by the DMV)

• NC **does not have a mandatory** DMV notification of diagnosis of dementia
Planning for Driving Retirement

• Never too *early*
• Involve *family* and close *friends*
• Develop *agreement*
• *Alternative* transportation options
• Sign a driving *contract*
Alternative Transportation

• Transition driving responsibilities
  – Family members
  – Friends

• Arrange transportation services

• Reduce need to drive
  – Mail prescriptions, grocery delivery, meal delivery
Alternative Transportation

• Ridesinsight.org
• Center for Volunteer Caregiving (Free – Wake County)
• Transportation Solutions for Caregivers
• National Association of Agencies on Aging
• Local Area Agency on Aging
• AARP Mobility Resources
• Local Alzheimer’s disease chapters
Driving Against Medical Advice

- Legal implications
- Patient will be held at fault for an accident
Clinical Resources in North Carolina

• Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Center (Veterans only)
  – Salisbury, NC
• Duke University Health Center at Lenox Baker
  – Durham, NC
• Frye Regional Rehabilitation Hospital
  – Hickory, NC
• Driver Rehabilitation Services, P.A.
  – McLeansville, NC
• Forsyth Medical Hospital
  – Winston-Salem, NC
• Care Partners Health Systems
  – Asheville, NC
References


• North Carolina General Assembly (2019) Physicians, psychologists, and other medical providers providing medical information on drivers with physical or mental disabilities or disease: Available at: www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statute
Questions?
Duke’s Comprehensive Community Mobility Evaluation

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Thank you for joining us today!

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