

TRB 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Human Factors Workshop #138  
Occupational Therapy's Role In  
Decisions About Driving Evaluation  
And Community Mobility

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# Occupational Therapy & Driving

- Occupational therapy:  
*“Addressing engagement in occupation to support participation”*
- IADLs are defined as  
*“activities that are oriented toward interacting with the environment and that are often complex.”*

(AOTA Practice Framework, 2002)



# AD Symptoms Impacting Driving

- Degenerative disease
- Progressing memory loss
- Increasing inability to perform well learned tasks
- Decrease in judgment
- Impaired reasoning
- Inattention and disorientation
- Restlessness
- anxiety

(Hunt,L., Morris,J et el 1993)

# Occupational Therapy's Role

- Prevention & Wellness
- Education
  - Self-awareness and risk
  - Medical conditions and driving
- Evaluation
  - Clinical
  - On road (requires professionals with specialized training)
- Individualized education (post screen or evaluation)
- Strategies for cessation & compliance
  - Client
  - Family
- Selection of alternative mobility
  - “dementia friendly”

# RISK

*When a person with impaired ability to drive drives*

Impaired cessation:

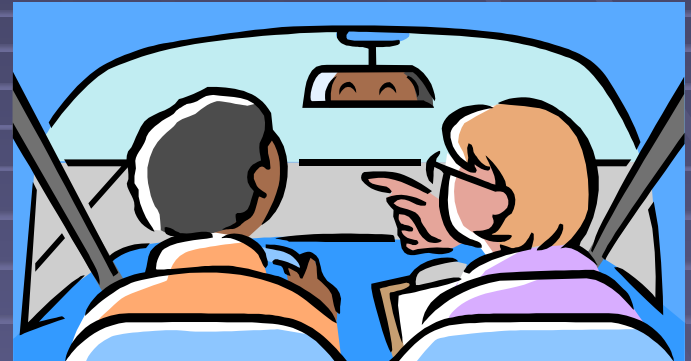
- non-compliance – drives anyway
- Lack of understanding – believes they can
- Forgets – without family /caregiver intervention the recommendation is not recalled
  
- Considering the impairments associated with dementia ...The role of family / caregiver in the process of cessation is critical

# Prevention, Education, Choices and Self-limiting Behavior

- OT Program in North Carolina working with
  - Continuing Care Retirement Communities
  - Partner with AARP, AAA, Area Agencies on Aging, and Medical Review Board of the DMV
- Screening of risk factors
  - Goal: education
  - May refer for a comprehensive driving evaluation
- Address community mobility alternatives – early!
  - Choice
  - Options

# Determining FITNESS TO DRIVE

- Evaluation “The Driving Evaluation”
  - What to evaluate?
  - When to evaluate?
- Driving evaluation requires
  - Clinical plus on-road
    - Exception: medical conditions
  - Specialized education
- Outcome of evaluation
  - No impairment
  - Impairment – “remediate the deficit”
    - offer Training
    - Referral (specialists for vision, depression, flexibility or range of motion)
  - Impairment-
    - Adaptation, compensation
    - recommend restriction
  - Cessation
    - Transitioning
    - Appropriate alternatives



# On Road Evaluation

- Functional performance in context
  - “neighborhood” and familiar routes
- Early MCI or Mild dementia
  - For those that demonstrate ability to learn
  - Strategies and compensation
- Impaired driving ability
  - Challenge problem solving and judgment
  - Opportunity for family observation and buy-in
- Family opportunity to “observe”

# Determining FITNESS TO DRIVE

- Timing...at what point in the progression?
  - Predicting the course of the disease
  - Impact of medications (retard decline)
- Psycho-social
  - Personality style
  - Capacity for insight, self awareness and self regulation



# Driving Cessation in Older Adults with Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type (Carr 2005)

- Looked at the process of cessation by older adults with dementia (archival database Wash U AD Research Center)
  - Timing
  - Reasons
  - Methods
- Surprised to find no differences in the psychometric profiles
- Many stopped driving at mild level ... might they have ceased driving prematurely?

# Possible contributors to cessation

- Psychosocial factors may play a more important role
- Medical illness
- Most stopped at the request of family but frequently the physician and client were involved
- Need for planning for alternatives

# Cessation

- Role of family
  - Importance of understanding, “buy-in”
- Cessation strategies
  - Environmental
  - Contextual
  - Physical
- “How to keep loved one from driving is not intuitive”
  - Protect vs. restrict

# Resources (handouts)

available at [www.aota.org/olderdriver](http://www.aota.org/olderdriver)

- AOTA Driving Statement
- AOTA Older Driver Fact sheet  
[www.aota.org/olderdriver](http://www.aota.org/olderdriver)
- OT Practice articles (both posted on the Microsite at [www.aota.org/olderdriver](http://www.aota.org/olderdriver))
  - Starting Down the Road to Establishing driver Evaluation Program by Susan Pierce
  - Screening Driving and Community Mobility Status by Joe Pellerito and Elin Schold Davis

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