Counseling Older Drivers

Bill Roccaforte
Associate Professor
UNMC Geriatric Psychiatry

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Disclosure

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Objectives

To learn about:

• Why driving retirement is a difficult topic to discuss with patients.
• How we can help our patients plan for driving retirement.
• How we can constructively intervene when driving is unsafe.
• Legal and ethical issues in driving retirement.
Exhibit A

What do you mean I can’t drive you expletives deleted idiot.
Your tests have nothing to do with driving.
I never had a ticket.
I never had a crash.
You can’t make me stop!
Driving retirement is a difficult topic to discuss!

• Anger may be directed at us
• Potential damage to therapeutic relationship
• Loss related to changes of:
  – mobility
  – level of care
  – independence
  – control
  – self-esteem
Counseling

• Broach eventual cessation early
• Involve trusted allies
• Develop a game plan
  – Alternatives
  – Players
  – Written “contract”
Counseling

• Review risk with driver and caregiver
• Recommend driving adjustments
• Provide educational material
• Monitor driving
• Refer to specialists
• Explore alternatives
ONE DEAD: Iowa State Trooper Jeff Stokes looks over a wrecked car that was driven the wrong way Sunday on the Mormon Bridge's eastbound lanes. One person was killed and four were hurt in the accident.

**Easter Outing Kills One, Injures Four**

**BY CHRIS CLAYTON**

**and MIKE SHERRY**

WORLD HERALD STAFF WRITERS

It was supposed to be one of the first outings for Glenwood, Iowa, residents Dwight and Marilee since Dwight's stroke 17 years ago.

But misdirection on Interstate 680 turned the Easter drive to Omaha into a tragedy for the Shaw and their son, Mike, 11, of Omaha, when their vehicle was involved in a collision while heading the wrong way into traffic on the Mormon Bridge.

Dwight, 87, died. Marilee and Hill, her son from a previous marriage, are in critical condition at University Hospital in Omaha.

Marilee, 72, was driving a gray 1987 Pontiac station wagon heading west in an eastbound lane on I-680 about 4 p.m. Sunday when the car smashed nearly head-on with a white 1994 Cutlass Supreme driven by Ann Jacobsen of Shelby, Iowa. Officials weren't sure exactly where the Shaws made a wrong turn to get on the Interstate.

"There are so many different places she could've gotten on" the highway, said Iowa State Patrol Trooper Mike Wesack, who responded to the accident.

The Shaws were headed to Omaha to visit another son, said Nada Van Buskirk, Marilee Shaw's sister. The family was excited about the drive because it was one of the first times Dwight had left Glen Haven Nursing Home since his stroke, Van Buskirk said.

Monday morning was tough for Van Buskirk, who learned that Marilee Shaw and Hill were fighting for their lives. Shaw has a broken pelvis and other injuries. Hill, who is 48 and developmentally disabled, suffered massive internal injuries and needed surgery Sunday night.

"They don't know right now whether he is going to make it," Van Buskirk said.

Jacobsen, 35, suffered a broken right ankle and head cuts. She was in fair condition Monday at St. Joseph Hospital in Omaha. Her son, Brandon Jacobsen, 13, suffered facial injuries. He was treated at St. Joseph and released.
Body Identified as Long-Missing Hastings Man, 64

BY PAUL HAMMEL
WORLD HERALD BUREAU

Lincoln — Skeletal remains found in a highway ditch south of Grand Island, Neb., on Saturday have been identified as those of a 64-year-old Hastings, Neb., man missing since February 1999.

...a retired businessman, was last seen Feb. 15, 1999.

...daughter told investigators that her father had a history of mental illness and dementia.

Hall County Attorney Jerry Janulewicz said Thursday that personal items, including a credit card and a diamond ring, and dental records were used to identify the remains.

He said that because of the advanced deterioration of the remains, a pathologist was unable to determine the cause of death. Janulewicz said there were no obvious signs of foul play or reasons to believe that foul play was involved, and it may never be known how Kaul died.

“We are trying to sort out the puzzle of how he came to be where he was found,” Janulewicz said. “We may never know the answer to that.”

The Hall County Sheriff’s Office is asking anyone who may have come into contact with him before his disappearance to call (308) 383-5200.

The body was found along U.S. Highway 281 about 1½ miles north of Interstate 80 by a 10-year-old girl working with volunteers to clear litter from the ditch. When she reached for a boot, she discovered the skeletal remains in thick, tall grass just beyond an area that had been mowed, Janulewicz said.

The road ditch had been mowed eight times by state crews since February 1999. The body may have been run over by a mower, he said.

Janulewicz said that the condition of the body was consistent with being out in the elements since February 1999.
Dealer Sold 7 Cars To Alzheimer’s Patient

Portland, Ore. (AP) — An auto dealer who sold seven cars in one month to a man with Alzheimer’s disease has agreed to pay $120,000 in fines and restitution.

In an agreement with the Oregon Attorney General’s Office, Hillsboro Chrysler Plymouth Jeep Warehouse agreed to reverse the sales and pay $90,879 to [redacted], 78, who bought the cars in February and March 2000.

The dealer also paid the Justice Department $31,000, most of which will go to a consumer-protection fund.

Dealership manager Kevin Chimienti said his salespeople not only didn’t break the law, but they didn’t know the victim had bought that many cars.

“We weren’t aware we had sold him seven cars,” Chimienti said. “He dealt with different people.”

[redacted], who has no driver’s license, traded in two of his own vehicles and bought sports cars and sport utility vehicles totaling $244,708.
More Risks

- Emotional impact of crashing
- Legal consequences
- Financial consequences
Counseling

• Review risk with driver and caregiver
• Recommend driving adjustments
• Provide educational material
• Monitor driving
• Refer to specialists
Elderly Drivers’ Adaptations

- Restrict range
  - Fewer miles
  - Essential trips
- Avoid complex traffic sites
  - Left turns
  - Merging lanes
  - Avoid high speed roadways
- Optimal conditions
- Use seat belts
Counseling

- Review risk with driver and caregiver
- Recommend driving adjustments
- Provide educational material
- Monitor driving
- Refer to specialists
Patient and Caregiver Educational Material
The AMA Physician Guide to Assessing and Counseling Older Drivers

- AARP Driving Safety Program
- National Association of Social Workers
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- Community Transportation Association
Counseling

• Review risk with driver and caregiver
• Recommend driving adjustments
• Provide educational material
• Monitor driving
• Refer to specialists
Monitor Driving

- Instruct family members to ride with the driver regularly
- Have serial formal testing done
Counseling

• Review risk with driver and caregiver
• Recommend driving adjustments
• Provide educational material
• Monitor driving
• Refer to specialists
Refer to Specialists

• Driver Rehab Specialist
• Department of Motor Vehicles Testing Station
• Local Safety Councils
Counseling the Unsafe Driver

- Listen to their concerns and feelings
- Try to connect on common ground
- Realistic reassurance about transportation plans
- Take the heat off of the family and primary health care provider
“Enforcing” With the Determined Driver

1) Disable the car
   a) Hiding, altering or replacing the keys
   b) Change the locks
   c) Use “The Klub”

2) Use written reminders
   a) Write a prescription
   b) Send a letter

3) Remove the car

4) Destroy the drivers license

5) Report to DMV
Legal/Ethical Considerations

• Protecting the patient
  – Obligation to explain risks associated with medical problems

• Protecting the public
  – Physicians may be held liable for third-party injuries
Reporting to the DMV

- May lead to liability for breaching confidentiality
- Not reporting may breach the responsibility to protect the patient and public
Protect yourself legally

- Know and abide by your state reporting laws
- Document recommendations, reasoning, referrals and reports.
NEBRASKA REPORTING

• Letter to the DMV
• Health Advisory Board notified
  – medical record and/or examination
  – appearance before the Board
  – driving evaluation
• No liability protection for the reporting party
• The reporting party will remain anonymous
• Decisions can be appealed to the courts
CONSEQUENCES OF DRIVING CESSATION

- Loss of independence
- Diminished quality of life
- Financial burden
- Caregiver stress
- Safety compromised?
I want to die like my grandfather, peacefully in my sleep and not screaming and terrified like the persons in his car.

Garrison Keillor
References

- www.ama-assn.org/go/olderdrivers
- www.research.aarp.org/consume (enter “driving” for a search)
- www.nhtsa.dot.gov (go to “Senior Driving”)
- www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers