

# Driving restrictions and Old Age

Is graduated delicensing an  
alternative to no licence?

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# Statistics

- the number of drivers involved in MVAs decreases with age
- the number of MVAs per km driven increases  $> 75$
- the fatality rate increases with age
- 2.5 million drivers aged 65+ by 2028 in Ontario

# Driving and Dementia in Ontario

- estimated about 130,000 drivers with dementia by 2028
- individuals with dementia continue to drive for about 4 years after onset of symptoms
- estimated that 75% of drivers with dementia are still driving
- this group may increase to about 100,000 by 2028

# Driving and Dementia in Ontario...

- the focus on drivers over 80 overlooks a significant number of potentially dangerous drivers under 80
- the screening process may not detect people in the early stages of dementia and is not designed to detect individuals with dementia
- drivers with dementia are 2-5 times more likely to be involved in a collision

# Driving and Dementia in Ontario...

- the burden of detecting potentially dangerous drivers has been transferred to the medical profession
- the duty to report [responsibility for others] trumps confidentiality and person's autonomy
- duty to report can be seen as a guided by principal of benevolence

# The Human Factor

- functional deficits in older age include:
  - reduced dynamic visual acuity
  - slower reaction time
  - reduced dynamic perception
  - difficulties with tasks requiring divided attention
  - the threshold for dark adaptation declines with age
  - information processing declines with memory loss

# The Human Factor...

- loss of visual fields
- deficits translate into quality of offences:
  - signs - not obeying signage
  - turning - left turns
  - right of way - merging, passing
  - going through lights - primarily at night

# What can happen

- older experienced drivers aware of their limitations may:
  - drive fewer miles
  - drive familiar routes for specific tasks
  - drive in daylight only
  - avoid busy congested roads and highways
  - avoid driving in bad weather

# Or...

- the older driver may:
  - overestimate their driving skills
  - not recognize age-related deficits that are relevant to driving [not restricted to the elderly]
- family or friends may attempt to restrict access to the car, disable the car, cause the car to vanish, and/or refer the person to a physician for assessment [coercive approach]

# Road Factors

- inadequate lighting at intersections
- redundant signage
- poorly maintained lines on roads

# Societal responsibilities?

- to improve road conditions, signage, and lighting to accommodate declining abilities
- to provide training at a certain age to maintain/improve driving skills
- to ensure an alternate form of transportation
- not to disadvantage the elderly by demanding a higher standard of accountability [distributive justice]

# Consequences and Quality of life

- we should be guided by principle of the least restrictive alternative
- feeling helpless - future guided by perception of others
- persistent loss of privacy
- burden of dependence
- risk of isolation greater without transportation

# Graduated delicensing

- direct assessment of driving ability should be the guide
- assessment of relevant deficits associated with age
- assessment of relevant deficits associated with underlying medical illness
- would appropriate tests provide the basis for a graded approach to licensing?