**Driving Impairment Among Older Adults**

**A person and person in a car

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It is no surprise the vehicle accidents are primarily caused by human error, with over 90% of crashes meeting this criterion. While individuals of any age may get into accidents, the risk of being in a fatal accident is 2.5 times higher for adults ages 75 to 79 years and 5 times higher for adults who are 80 years or older. These shocking statistics drive further investigation into the safety of driving for older individuals and highlight potential medical conditions and medications that may place older adults at risk.

**Age-Related Medical Conditions**

Well-known medical conditions associated with driving impairment include acute conditions such as seizures, fainting, drops in blood pressure or blood sugar, or episodes of dizziness following irregular heartbeats. In addition to these acute conditions that may impact the safety of driving, it is also important to consider the potential chronic conditions that can place older drivers at risk. Conditions such as dementia, Parkinson’s disease, prior stroke, or untreated sleep apnea occur more frequently among older adults and may be one of these reasons why operating vehicles can be more dangerous for this patient population.

**Medications to Consider**

Additionally, certain classes of medications like benzodiazepines, opioids, anti-cholinergics, or anti-convulsant or anti-psychotic medications may cause driver impairment by decreasing the ability to think alertly. Patients who are taking a combination of these sedating medication types are especially at risk.

**Potential Solutions**

Fortunately, there are a variety of promising solutions available to help older individuals stay safe. Loved ones and family members should spend time in the car with older drivers to evaluate their driving and determine if they are able to drive safely. Additionally, distractions while driving such as using or talking on cellphones should be avoided. A careful look into the individual’s medication list by a doctor or pharmacist can also help determine if sedating medications are present and if there is a possibility to reduce the dose of or avoid these medications. Finally, advances in driving technology related to lane assist features, blind spot warnings, or alerts about weather conditions or hazards in the road may help older drivers stay safe as well. Ultimately, by remaining aware of potential medical conditions and medications that place older adults at risk and implementing solutions, driving can become safer for these individuals.

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