

# *Conversations about Driving*

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# *Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*

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- Approximately 23,000 Manitobans have Alzheimer's disease or other dementia
- In 2017, 18% of MB drivers with valid licences were over the age of 65
- Manitobans are living longer and driving longer
- Large number senior drivers at risk of developing chronic medical conditions including dementia



# Driving & Age Related Changes

- Driving complex, fast-paced activity
- Typical driver makes 30 decisions per kilometre, with  $< \frac{1}{2}$  second to respond to changes on the road
- Increasing age brings greater likelihood of having a medical condition that impacts driving



# *Driving & Age Related Changes*

- Age alone doesn't determine ability to drive safely
- However, we must recognize changes in abilities as we age that may affect driving
- We all age at different rates
  - no set age when no longer safe to drive
- Medical conditions may exacerbate age related changes



# *Driving & Age Related Changes*

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Vision - 85% of info to make safe driving decisions.

- Declines age 40-50, more so thereafter
- Decreased ability to notice details
- Prolonged glare recovery time
- Colours harder to see – red – 2x longer to see brake lights



# *Driving & Age Related Changes*

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## Physical

- May feel weaker, stiffer, experience pain or move more slowly

## Reaction Time

- May find more difficult to react quickly

## Cognition

- May have more difficulty remembering things, making decisions or completing activities with distractions



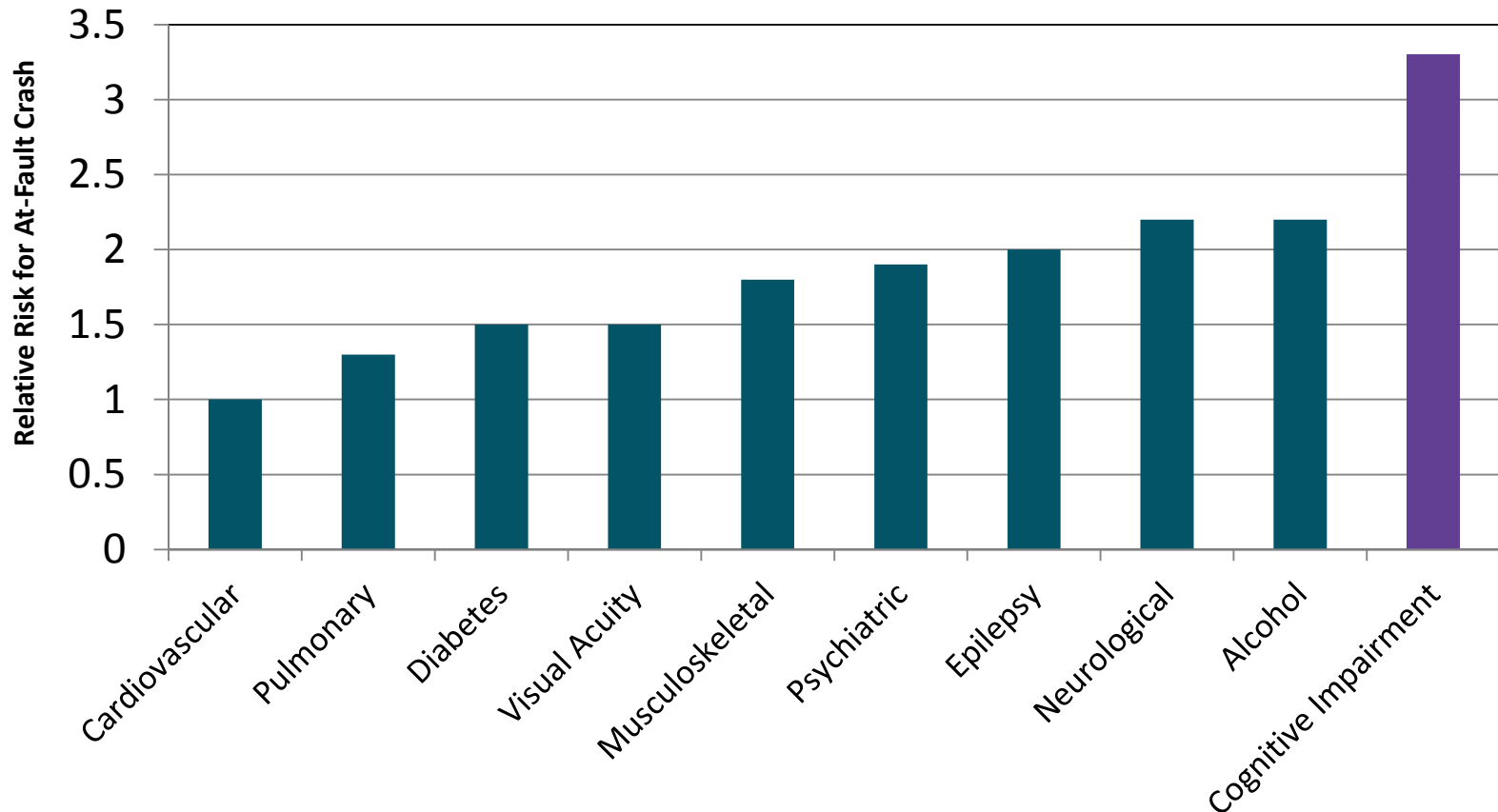
# *Medical Conditions & Aging Drivers*

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- Many medical conditions age associated
- Medical conditions primary cause for declining abilities that affect driving
- Many individual conditions cause subtle cognitive impairment; multiple conditions increase risk - cumulative effect
- Cognitive impairment can affect insight about driving ability – unaware of decline or dangerous driving behaviour



# Relative Risk for At-Fault Crashes for Selected Medical Conditions\*



\* Diller, E., Cook, L., Leonard, D., et al. (1999). Evaluating drivers licensed with medical conditions in Utah, 1992-1996. DOT HS 809 023. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.





# *Signs that Cognition Affecting Driving*

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## **Cognition**

memory, orientation, insight, attention,  
executive function



## **Executive Function**

organization, problem solving, planning, decision making,  
mental flexibility



# *Signs that Cognition Affecting Driving*

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## Memory:

- Forget how to use vehicle controls, forgets route to familiar destination & gets lost
- Difficulty remembering what to do while driving, e.g., forget to signal lane change, looking before making lane changes

## Orientation:

- Mistake accelerator for brake
- Remain stopped at intersection when safe to proceed
- Asks obvious questions, e.g., which lane to use, what to do at traffic signs
- Inconsistent or erratic lane position

# *Signs that Cognition Affecting Driving*

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## Insight

- Doesn't think has driving problem, thinks drives as well as, or better than others
- Blames their mistakes on other drivers
- Doesn't recognize driving mistakes

## Attention

- Drives through red light or stop sign; fail to follow traffic sign information
- Stops at green light or elsewhere for no reason
- Doesn't realize vehicles travelling in opposite direction
- Doesn't yield right of way
- Distracted by passengers talk or car radio

# *Signs that Cognition Affecting Driving*

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## Executive Function

- Accidents involving complex driving situations, e.g., left hand turns
- Difficulty planning route or modifying route when driving
- Incorrectly sequence driving action, e.g., activate turn signal after make turn
- Unable to make decision using info on traffic signs
- Confused or frustrated during routine driving actions
- Driving too slowly for conditions



# Driver Fitness Department

- Driver Fitness department of MPI can become aware of medical concerns and fitness to drive through a number of ways:
  - Health Care Providers
  - Self-reports
  - Police/RCMP reports
  - Collision involvement
  - Concerns from the public
- A medical examination report may be requested
- Facilitates a variety of functional assessments to determine if an individual is safe to continue driving



# *Conversations About Driving*

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- Starting a conversation, especially with parent, is challenging for most. Will likely involve multiple conversations.
- Concerns re: offending or alienating the person is normal
- No one 'right' way to address
- Important to stress the positive and offer alternatives



# *Conversations About Driving*

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## Plan Ahead:

Complete following checklist before starting conversation

### 1) Conduct a “ride-along”

- Do several trips, note thoughts and observations – positive and negative.
- Ride at different times - variety of driving conditions

### 2) Talk with other passengers, friends/family about unsafe driving incidents. Consider family dynamics; some may not acknowledge problem – separate conversation

# *Conversations About Driving*

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## 3) Understand transportation needs

- Determine purpose for driving, e.g., store, appts, social activities, religious activities
- Helps appreciate how important driving is and assists finding transportation alternatives

## 4) Determine local transportation services

- Shop from home services, e.g., medication, hair stylists, groceries
- Take trips on these services to understand use, convenience, easy access
- Create list of services, cost to use, scheduling, phone numbers to share during conversation





# *Conversations About Driving*

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## 5) Consult people with special knowledge

- Collect information about retraining courses, driving schools for lessons
- Encourage visit to family doctor regarding medical condition/symptoms
- Talk to doctor separately about your concerns and observations



# Conversations About Driving

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## 6) Review Vehicle Costs

- Compare with alternative transportation costs
- Calculate actual costs
- Cost sheet



## 7) Write it down

- Develop plan for conversation
- Organize information - make list of safety and medical concerns
- Have information ready



# *Conversations About Driving*

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## During conversation

- Indicate concern; explain why - give examples
- Focus on medical condition vs past driving record, “Medical conditions can make the best driver unsafe”
- We all must retire from driving eventually – most people now outlive ability to drive safely
- Be a good listener; be sensitive but resolved



# *What to do – Start A Conversation*

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Use what is most comfortable for you. Conversation starter examples:

- Dad, we've seen things that indicate you are having some problems driving...
- I'm concerned about your safety and that someone might get hurt...
- I know how important driving is to you, but I also know how concerned you are about other people
- I know you've been a good driver for a long time, but things have changed...
- You've always been straight with me and now I need to be straight with you...
- Others?

# Dealing with Negative Reactions

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- Sometimes fear of depending on others overrides best efforts or lack of insight prevents acknowledging issues

## Tips:

- Do not become defensive – be a good listener. Allow to express feelings and emotions. Helps to understand why conversation is upsetting
- Respond with empathetic phrases – “I understand how this is upsetting”, or “ Let’s focus on what we can do to help keep you safe without limiting when and where you want to go”

# *Dealing with Negative Reactions*

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- Do not lecture or demand that older adult give up keys – the more you alienate your listener, the less you can help them
- Be objective – encourage to check skills/abilities with self-rating program, or getting professional assessment



# *Work together to agree on plan of action*

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- Initiate conversation earlier than later if possible, making transition to passenger gradually
- Help make doctors appt to address/support medical concerns
- Begin with self-imposed restrictions on when or where wants to drive
- Start using alternative transportation, go together if possible
- Incorporate information from your plan, e.g. using home hair stylist periodically, senior centre transportation options, car pooling, list of family and friends available to drive etc
- Introduce moving to residence where more transportation options are available



# Driver Training

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- If training feasible, may enroll in a driver training course or take private driving lessons
- [Safety Services Manitoba](#) offers a free course intended especially for mature drivers



# Other Resources

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**MPI website for drivers and families:** This website explains the assessment process MPI uses to assess the effect of medical conditions on driving <http://www.mpi.mb.ca>

**The Transportation Options Network for Seniors:** (TONS) works to inform Manitobans about transportation options that enhance quality of life and to promote age-friendly communities. [www.tonsmb.org](http://www.tonsmb.org) (204) 799-1788



# Other Resources

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## **The Alzheimer Society of Manitoba**

[www.alzheimer.mb.ca/index.php](http://www.alzheimer.mb.ca/index.php)

**Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat:** A central source of information and referral for seniors and families, senior's organizations and govt depts. [www.gov.mb.ca/shas](http://www.gov.mb.ca/shas)

