ADHD Behind the Wheel

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Stages of Driving

• Operational competence
  • Basic skills of driving, such as breaking, scanning for hazards, motor coordination, and reaction time

• Tactical competence
  • Skills needed to make decisions about driving a vehicle in traffic, such as yielding, regulating speed, and deciding when to pass a vehicle.

• Strategic competence
  • Skills needed to make decisions about making a trip and using the car, such as deciding on the best time of day for a trip, whether it’s okay to drive in a light snowstorm, or whether one is too sleepy to drive.
MVC Risk Factors

- Improper use of seat belt or other occupant restraint
- Driving while impaired by alcohol
- Speeding
- Distractions
MVC Risk Factors

• Age
• Experience
• Cognitive Development
  • General attention
  • Speed of processing
  • Executive function
• Environment
Why are drivers with ADHD at risk?

- Inattention
- Impulsivity
- Executive Dysfunction
Driving Attention

- Drivers with ADHD are at increased risk for inattention particularly during periods of monotonous driving
Driver Distraction

• Distractions can arise from common tasks as well as those usually considered “distracted driving”
  • Drinking
  • Eating
  • Talking to passenger
  • Daydreaming
  • Use of electronic devices
Impulsivity

- Speeding
- Frustration with others on the road
- Changing lanes in unsafe ways
- Greater likelihood of MVC following unexpected events
Executive Dysfunction

- Individuals with ADHD have difficulty with task
  - Organization
  - Prioritization
  - Activation
  - Focus
  - Attention (sustained and shifting)
Executive Dysfunction

- Individuals with ADHD have difficulty
  - Regulating alertness
  - Sustaining effort
  - Processing speed
  - Managing emotions
  - Working memory
  - Memory recall
  - Monitoring and regulating actions
ACTIVITY 1
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

- Teens & adults share similar challenges while driving
- Teens & adults with ADHD over-represented among MVC-related morbidity and mortality compared to non-ADHD peers
  - Distractibility
  - Inattention
  - Impulsivity
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

- Teens & adults with ADHD more likely than non-ADHD peers to
  - Overestimate driving ability
  - Experience crashes
  - Receive traffic tickets for speeding
  - Fail to obey traffic laws
  - Drive recklessly
  - Drive on a suspended license
  - Drive without a license
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

• Untreated symptoms of ADHD in teens & adults can result in driving behaviors similar to intoxicated driving

• Experience can help reduce adult risky driving, but constant vigilance is needed
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

• Awareness of driving ability needs to be part of overall ADHD behavioral management plan
  • Supplemental driver training focusing on symptoms of individual
    • Improve attention
    • Control negative emotions

• Use of stimulant medication has been shown to reduce risky driving behavior in people with ADHD
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

• Avoid vehicles with “the works”
  • Heads up displays
  • Integrated cell phone/texting capabilities
  • Steering wheel controls for vehicle’s cabin

• Opt for a manual transmission that requires more of driver’s attention
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

• Reduce distractions in the car
  • Turn cell-phones off

• Know state traffic laws including the
  • Correct use of turn signals/indicators
  • Speed zone requirements
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks

• Attend (and pass) a driver education program specifically addressing ADHD-related issues

• Work with health-care providers to address individual needs
Medication

- Use of stimulant medication has been shown to reduce risky driving behavior in people with ADHD
Medication

- There are many stimulants available to treat ADHD
  - Short-Acting
    - Amphetamine/Dextroamphetamine (Adderall)
    - Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine, ProCentra, Zenzedi)
    - Dexmethylphenidiate (Focalin)
    - Methylphenidate (Ritalin)
  - Intermediate-Acting
    - Amphetamine sulfate (Evekeo)
    - Methylphenidate (Ritalin SR, Metadate ER, Metylin ER)
  - Long-Acting
    - Adzenys XR-ODT
    - Dexmethylphenidate (Focalin XR)
    - Dextroamphetamine (Adderall XR)
    - Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse)
    - Methylphenidate (Concerta, Daytrana, Metadate CD, Quillivant XR, Ritalin LA)
Challenges of Driving as reported by parents
Be Aware of Legal Restrictions

• Stages of Graduated Drivers License
  • Supervised learning period
  • Intermediate license
  • Full-Privilege license
Driver Training

- Simulators
- Instructors
- Individualized Drivers Ed
Parent-Teen Communication

• Teens with ADHD are likely to display rebellion with their driving behavior
• Parents should stress safety when determining teen driving rules
  • Seat belt use
  • Inexperience
  • Cell phone use (talking & texting)
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks for Teens

• Parents can help by
  • Reminding teens that driving is a privilege
  • Knowing the laws concerning licensure
  • Providing a strong example of safe driving behaviors to your teen
  • Waiting until your teen is ready to get his/her license (don’t rush them)
  • Enrolling your teen in a ADHD-specific driver safety course
Drivers with ADHD – Reducing the Risks for Teens

• Parents can help by
  • Being activity involved in your teen’s driving and noting his/her level of driving maturity over time
  • Having teen keep a driving log and create a driving contract
    • Take medication
    • Record destination
    • Rules for activities while in the car (music, eating, phone use, number of passengers, etc.)
Activity 2
THANK YOU!

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