

**CHARACTERISTICS OF DRIVERS REFERRED BY POLICE TO VICROADS: EVIDENCE FOR INDICATORS OF DECLINING DRIVING COMPETENCE**

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**Background** Cognitive and physical impairments associated with health conditions and ageing may impact on driving capacity. With no age-based mandatory assessment, VicRoads relies on self and community referrals to initiate the process of identifying and managing potentially at-risk drivers. The majority of drivers reported to VicRoads are referred by police. As there is no published research which describes police referred drivers, this is an important study.

**Aims** Researchers sought to understand police referral information and the characteristics and medical review outcomes for a sample of drivers.

**Methods** A retrospective data mining methodology was applied to a sample of active de-identified driver files. Data were analysed using descriptive and  $\chi^2$  analyses.

**Results** Driver files (n=131) were reviewed and police referrals (n=141) were examined (some files had >1 referral). Average driver age was 76 years and 92% had at least one medical diagnosis. The majority of referrals (n=133) described an instigating event for example, poor driving (80%) and/or a crash (68%), with most occurring at intersections (37%) or in car parks (20%). Events were commonly associated with inappropriate/dangerous driving (62%) or failing to obey road laws (47%). The review process resulted in licence cancellation/suspension for 46% of drivers: licence withdrawal was associated with increasing age, certain medical conditions, poor driving and inappropriate driver behaviour.

**Significance** Police play an important role in DLA medical review systems: results highlight (a) what triggers a review request and driver characteristics, and (b) the need to educate police and the community about indicators of declining driving competency.