

Law Enforcement and the Older Driver: A Lack of Policies, Procedures, and Resources

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An elderly driver, stopped by a law enforcement for unsafe driving behavior, appears confused.

What happens next?

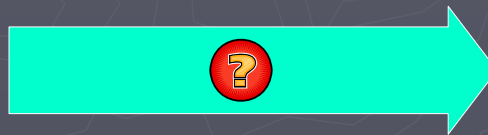


Cognitive Impairment

Normal Cognitive Aging

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

Dementia



Snellgrove 2005, Peterson 2003

Incidence of Dementia

65 years

85 years



1/100

9/100

In Snellgrove 2005

Licensed Drivers in Florida

- ▶ 15 million licensed drivers in Florida
 - 2.6 million aged 65 and older
 - 226,000 aged 85 and older
- ▶ 435,000 cases of probable Alzheimer's Disease in Florida
 - Estimated 115,000 licensed drivers with dementia in Florida
 - Newly diagnosed may drive an additional 4 years

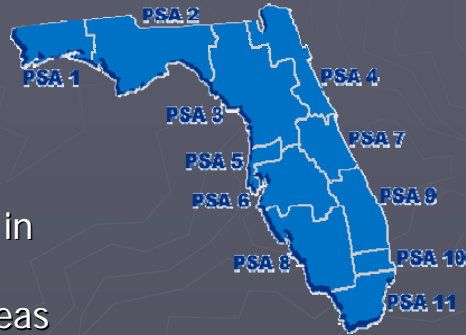
Carlin Rogers 2006, DOEA 2005, Alz Assn 2005, Friedland 1988, Gilley 1991

Purpose

- ▶ To examine the knowledge and current practices of Florida law enforcement with regard to encounters with drivers who exhibit symptoms associated with dementia

Methods

- ▶ Funded by FDOT/FDHSMV
- ▶ Semi-structured phone interview
- ▶ Conducted by Florida Senior Safety Resource Centers (FSSRC)
- ▶ Polled law enforcement in all 67 counties
- ▶ Counties grouped by areas served by (11) AAoA



Question 1: Training

- ▶ "Do your officers receive any training about Alzheimer's disease or other dementia?"
 - 47.5% reported that they have received some sort of training
 - Wide variability: 0% to 87.5%
 - Area 4 received training via pilot program

Results: Types of Training

- ▶ Alzheimer's Association provided training
- ▶ Daytona Beach: "2 hour orientation and annual refresher"
- ▶ "No, not yet...training is next year"
- ▶ "...learned about the Safe Return Program"

Question 2: Bracelet

- ▶ "Do your officers look for a bracelet that identifies the driver as having dementia?"
 - 77.3% reported that their officers look for a bracelet
 - Many reported that they were unaware of programs

Results: Bracelet

- ▶ Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program
- ▶ Project Lifesaver

Question 3: Senior Services Officer

- ▶ "Does your department have a senior services officer dedicated to handling older adult issues?"
 - 15.8% reported that their department had such an officer or an arrangement with another agency
 - More likely in more populated areas (48.7%)

Results: Senior Services Officer

- ▶ "No, usually just 2 officers on duty at a time"
- ▶ "...no funding for that position"
- ▶ Broward County: "Many departments have a senior services officer"
- ▶ Coral Springs: "...have had a person in this position for 9 years"
- ▶ "Elderly Call" list

Question 4: Medical Reporting Form

- ▶ Does your department use the DHSMV medical reporting form when indicated?
 - 13% – 78% replied that they use (or have used) the State's medical reporting form
 - Many reported that they were unaware of form

Results: Use of Reporting Form

- ▶ "We do not know about the form"
- ▶ "...aware of form, but don't use it"
- ▶ "We thought they needed to be filled out by a doctor"
- ▶ "Sometimes the Sheriff will fill it out"
- ▶ "No, we use the 'check-off box' on the citation form"

Question 5: Protocol/Policy

- ▶ Does your department have a protocol/procedure for interacting with drivers who are suspected of having dementia?
 - 37.2% replied that they have some sort of formal procedure (range 20-72%)
 - Higher likelihood in North Central and South Florida

Results: Policy/Protocol

- ▶ "Don't need one...never have needed one before"
- ▶ "We just follow standard procedure"
- ▶ "...treat as if they were intoxicated (or on-drugs)"
- ▶ "What is dementia?"
- ▶ Call EMS or Dept. of Children and Families (DCF)

Question 6: What does the officer do?

- ▶ If an officer is called to the scene of an accident (or pulls over a driver for unsafe driving behavior) and the officer suspects that the driver has some form of dementia, what does the officer do?
 - Wide variety of responses
 - Formal procedures/policies more common in North Central and Southeast Florida
 - Rural areas said these events rarely, if ever, occur

Results: What does the officer do?

Response	% Employing Method
Contact Family	73.0
Hospital/EMS	34.2
Take to Station	19.8
Senior services	14.4
Follow/Take Home	11.7
Mental Health Services	9.0
Baker Act	9.0
Check "re-test box"	7.2
Missing Persons	5.4
Let Them Drive Home	4.5
Revoke License	2.7
Total Responses = 111	

Results: What does the officer do?

- ▶ Decreased tendency to issue citations
 - Most officers are hesitant to arrest confused senior drivers who commit a traffic violation
 - Officers are advised not to issue a citation to a confused or demented senior
 - ▶ "It will be dismissed anyway"
 - ▶ "Judges don't understand what's going on"
 - ▶ "...will not receive corrective action in court"
 - ▶ "May cause more problems for individual and their family"
 - ▶ "(The driver) will not recall what the citation was for"

Results: What does the officer do?

- ▶ Call EMS
- ▶ Emergency Room
 - Take the older adult to the ER if it appears their confusion is due to a medical problem
 - ER is not typically recommended because they are used to dealing with emergencies rather than chronic conditions like dementia and, in addition, the person may wander away

Results: What does the officer do?

- ▶ Take them to a facility
 - "... the nearest mental health facility for an evaluation"
 - "Find an ALF or nursing home for temporary placement , or call DCF"
- ▶ Baker Act
 - "Used as a last resort..."
- ▶ Case-by-case basis

Discussion

- ▶ Education/training for law enforcement, judges, EMS personnel
 - General education regarding elder driver issues, dementia
 - May not have an effect on policy/procedures
 - Safe Return Program, Project Lifesaver, use of medical reporting form
 - Need for follow-up training
 - Problems with available time for training

Discussion

- ▶ Medical Reporting Form
 - Education needed to increase awareness
 - Research needed to examine the process and outcomes
 - ▶ DHSMV form
 - ▶ "Re-test" check box on violation form

Discussion

- ▶ Establishment of policies/procedures
 - Would provide starting point for intervention
 - Not practical for all departments to employ senior affairs officer
 - ▶ Senior friendly agencies/organizations need to be identified
 - Importance of issuing citations(?)



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