Driving medical assessment in older drivers: pilot study of 3-Domains toolkit in general practice

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Background: Driving is a complex task requiring requiring sensory input, cognitive function, and motor function. Ageing is associated with decline in sensory, cognitive and motor function. Older people are more vulnerable in crashes. The loss of a driving licence can be a devastating blow to independence and wellbeing.

Older drivers (>75 years) are required to have an annual driving medical assessment with their general practitioner (GPs). GPs make a recommendation on an older driver’s health and fitness to drive. Some GPs are not comfortable in this role, citing concern to maintain relationships, concern about the impact driving cessation can have, uncertainty in the context of fluctuating health status, and poor access to on-road testing.

The 3-Domains toolkit is a screening toolkit that measures across the three functional domains (sensory, motor, cognitive). The toolkit comprises visual acuity using a Snellen chart; the functional reach test; and the road signs recognition test. The three test scores combine to generate an overall score predicting the likelihood the older driver would pass an on-road driving test.

Purpose: To investigate the acceptability and feasibility of the 3-Domains toolkit in Australian general practice.

Methods: Pilot study in practices in Brisbane. The study will use mixed methods including semi-structured interviews with GPs, practice nurses and older drivers, and data on referrals for on-road testing before and after introduction of the toolkit.

UQ Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. 2020002119

Results: Recruitment and data collection on-going.

Conclusion: If acceptable and feasible, the toolkit could be used regularly in practices to inform clinical judgement and aid discussions about the need to plan for eventual driving cessation.

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Sensory Motor Cognitive