

Do we care about the road safety of people living with diabetes?

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Aims

- There are currently 2.9 million people in the UK living with diabetes¹, of which up to 1.1 million are treated using insulin and therefore susceptible to hypoglycaemia².
- Several studies have demonstrated a link between hypoglycaemia and driving mishaps^{3,4}.
- The aim of the present study was to assess patient awareness of driving regulations relevant to diabetes.

Methods

- A 37-point anonymous structured-questionnaire was distributed amongst 47 registered drivers attending a secondary care diabetes clinic in Birmingham (see **Fig. 1**).
- Information concerning diabetes treatment and knowledge of Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) regulations, including recognition of hypoglycaemic episodes, in addition to general precautions regarding hypoglycaemia, were sought.

Results

- Despite finding that 72.3% of participants had received information concerning DVLA regulations and advised precautions, the present study showed a surprising lack of awareness of details important towards safe driving.
- Amongst those surveyed, only 73.3% were always aware of when they were becoming hypoglycaemic; an absolute license stipulation according to DVLA regulations (see **Fig. 2**).
- With regard to advised precautions, 29.8% of patients were unable to identify a capillary blood glucose level of 5mmol/L or greater as a safe level for driving (see **Fig. 3**).
- Interestingly, only 14.9% of patients understood the recommendation of a 45-minute wait after achieving this recommended safe capillary blood glucose level.

Conclusion

- In keeping with previous studies², the majority of people living with diabetes have received information concerning driving regulations.
- However, there is a worrying lack of understanding of safe driving practices, indicating further efforts from healthcare professionals, charities and the DVLA are required.

Figure 1. Structured questionnaire

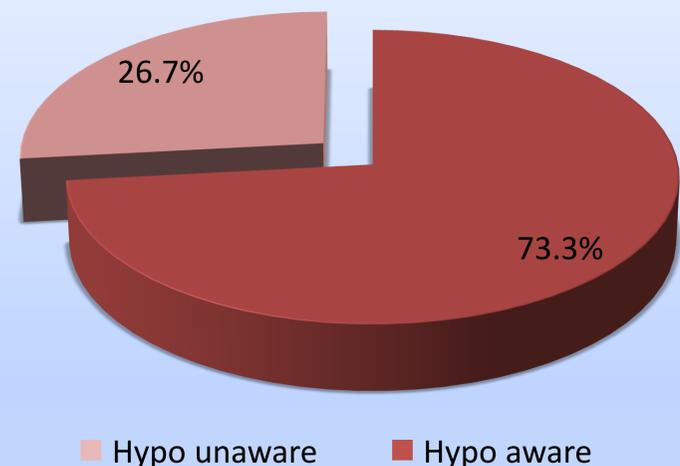


Figure 2. Surveyed patients' awareness of hypoglycaemic episodes

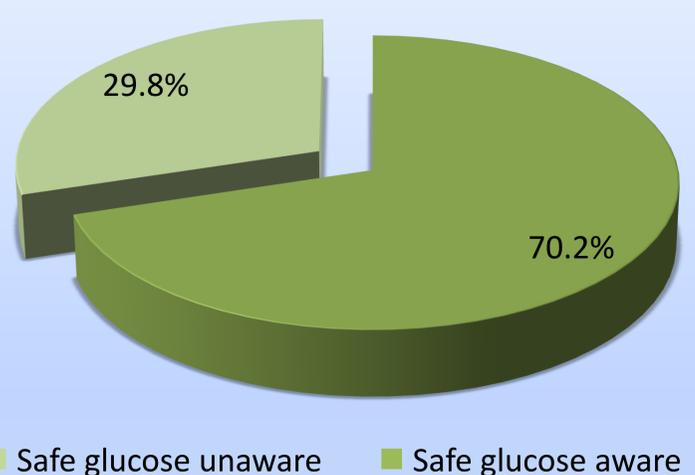


Figure 3. Surveyed patients' awareness of safe blood glucose levels for driving

References

1. Diabetes in the UK 2011-12 (Dec 2011): Key statistics on diabetes
2. Bodansky *et al.*, (2009). *Practical Diabetes International*, **26**: 318-321
3. Cox *et al.*, (2009). *Diabetes Care*, **32**: 2177-2180
4. Harsch *et al.*, (2002). *Journal of Internal Medicine*, **252**: 352-360