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 mishaps³,⁴.
- 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.

References

1. Diabetes in the UK 2011-12 (Dec 2011): Key statistics on diabetes