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The impact of Frontotemporal lobar degeneration on driver performance.

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Introduction:

To date, literature regarding drivers with dementia has primarily focussed on Alzheimer's disease (A.D.). Frontotemporal lobar dementia (FTLD) is responsible for approximately ten percent of all dementias with the two main presentations causing behavioural change or impairment of language. The most common clinical presentations are profound alterations in personality and social conduct, with inertia, loss of volition and social disinhibition. A dysexecutive syndrome occurs with deficits in attention, planning, organization judgement and problem solving (1). Unlike Alzheimer's disease there is not usually a primary memory disorder present.

Objectives:

1. For Occupational Therapy Driver Assessors (O.T.'s) to better understand the driver characteristics of clients with FTLD, how they differ from drivers with A.D. and how the progression of symptoms affects driver performance.
2. To assist O.T.'s in advising other Health Professionals about the need for driver assessment, the expected rate of decline in driving ability and reassessment timeframes.

Description:

Serial case studies will be presented, outlining driver characteristics and assessment outcomes, over time, for a number of clients.

Contribution to practice:

Occupational Therapists play a unique role in assessing and making recommendations regarding individuals' licence status. It is important that they are aware of the lesser known impact of dementias, such as FTLD, on driver performance and safety, in order to inform clients, their families and other health professionals.

References:

1. Neary,D., Snowden,J.S., Gustafson,L., Passant,U., Stuss,D., Black,S. *et al* (1998) Frontotemporal lobar degeneration - A consensus on clinical diagnostic criteria. *Neurology*, 51,6,1546 - 1554