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UC San Diego's TREDIS Program Promotes Safety

For the sixth consecutive year, the Training, Research and Education for Driving Safety (TREDIS) program at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine has been awarded a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety to promote driving safety in older adults. This team of experts, part of UCSD's Injury Epidemiology, Prevention and Research Center, has been working to keep Southern California's highways and senior drivers safe.



Linda Hill, MD, MPH, leader of the TREDIS program, shares valuable driving tips with the 10 News crew.

TREDIS training for health care professionals and law enforcement increases awareness of impairments common with aging that can impact driving ability. The health-related training focuses on screening guidelines recommended by the American Medical Association (AMA), rehabilitation options, and counseling techniques; while the law enforcement-related training offers visual representations of medical impairments behind the wheel, effective intervention approaches, and referral options.

“A multidisciplinary approach between the community, health professionals and law enforcement, is needed to keep older adults driving for as long as safely possible,” said Linda Hill, MD, MPH, clinical professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at UC San Diego School of Medicine. “It is very important for older adults to maintain a healthy lifestyle, to ensure driving fitness. At any age, abstaining from alcohol, wearing seatbelts and refraining from distractions is crucial to driving safety.”

More than 1500 health professionals and 1200 law enforcement officers in Southern California have received TREDIS training. Health professionals and students of health sciences throughout the state can receive the training through an interactive online curriculum. The training of health professionals and law enforcement can assist with the early identification of

conditions that can put drivers at risk. If impairments are identified, there are new technologies and vehicle adaptations that can be utilized to help a driver compensate for certain deficiencies.

“Many older adults begin to self-restrict and avoid demanding driving situations, but some continue to drive,” Raul Coimbra, MD, PhD, FACS, chief of the Division of Trauma at UC San Diego Health System and founder of the UCSD Injury Epidemiology, Prevention and Research Center. “Older adults who can no longer safely drive put themselves and their often frail passengers at risk. Older adults are four times more likely to die in crashes of similar intensity than 20 year olds.”

“Getting older does not mean the end of a person’s driving days,” said CHP Chief Jim Abele, commander of CHP’s Border Division. “It’s the perfect time to evaluate, improve and maintain the safety and mobility of California’s senior drivers.”

Additional Data

TRIP, a national transportation research group, estimates that the population of Americans 65 and older will grow by 60 percent over the next 15 years. Currently, California is the state with the greatest number of licensed older drivers with 3,146,256 drivers 65 and older.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that by the year 2020, there will be more than 40 million licensed drivers over the age of 65, and six million drivers over 65 in California by the year 2030.

As the “baby boom” generation reaches retirement at a rate of nearly 10,000 people per day for the next 20 years, Hill’s team says more focus has to be given to things that can be done to prolong safe driving: Families must begin talking about driving before a problem is suspected and any concerns should be openly discussed. Physicians should be included in these conversations, as they can advise on appropriate screening, nutrition, and physical activity guidelines. Medications should be reviewed routinely to identify any that could affect driving and to insure all are at the lowest effective dosage. Several organizations also offer mature driver courses to mitigate any bad habits that have developed over the years.

Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The grant team, led by Hill, includes Raul Coimbra, MD, PhD; Kathy Fischer, MD, MPH; Jill Rybar, MPH, project manager; and Tara Styer, MPH, training coordinator. For additional information or to schedule trainings, email TREDS@ucsd.edu or call 858-534-9330.

Additional resources to promote safe driving for older adults can be found on the TREDs website at: <http://treds.ucsd.edu>

The Injury Epidemiology, Prevention and Research Center

The UCSD Injury Epidemiology, Prevention and Research Center is a combined effort of the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, and Burns with its Level-1 Trauma Center and the Regional Burn Center and the UCSD Department of Preventive Medicine to make our communities safer and to decrease the burden of injuries to our society.

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