Effects of Benzodiazepine and Antidepressants on the Risk of Motor Vehicle Collision Injuries in the Elderly

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Psychoactive medications such as benzodiazepines and antidepressants increase the risk of motor vehicle collision injuries among elderly drivers by 50%. Benzodiazepines are a class of drugs used for anxiety and insomnia, while antidepressants are used for depression. These types of drugs interfere with the ability to drive by impairing central nervous functions, which consequently may contribute to motor vehicle accidents. It has been reported that psychoactive medications are most often used by the elderly. This raises and alarming concern, bearing in mind that 79% of the elderly, age 65-70, are still active drivers.

My research has focused on reviewing published literature that analyzed the impact of benzodiazepines and antidepressants on the driving ability of elderly individuals. I wanted to understand as to how these medications affect the ability to drive and thus increase the risk of accidents.

Benzodiazepines and antidepressants act on the central nervous system by bringing about drowsiness, sedation and confusion, which may affect an individual's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. These effects are also observed with the youth and adult and many other studies have been conducted with these age groups. However, with the growing population of the elderly, as a consequence of the baby boomer generation, more studies are needed to be conducted with the elderly as well. In my research I have focused on analyzing and gathering research and survey data on this subject. My contribution in this research is to gather information and bring about awareness of this subject.

References: