

*Issue: Ir Med J; Vol 113; No. 6; P110*

Letter to the Editor in Response to Articles Entitled:

**“Driving Advice with Prescription of Benzodiazepines and Z-drugs”**

*By K. May - Issue: Ir Med J; Vol 112; No. 10; P1028*

And

**“Driving and Psychotropic Medications: What Do Psychiatrists and Service Users Really Know?”**

*By S. Vartukapteine et al - Issue: Ir Med J; Vol 113; No. 1; P10*

**From:** L. Roche, M. Ryan, D. O’Neill

National Office for Traffic Medicine, Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, Kildare St, Dublin 2

**Re: Psychotropic Drugs, Mental Health and Driving**

Dear Sir,

The National Office for Traffic Medicine is encouraged to see an increased interest in Traffic Medicine and medical fitness to drive in recent issues of the Irish Medical Journal; two recent articles are of particular interest. In the November/December 2019 issue, May<sup>1</sup> suggests that individuals taking prescribed benzodiazepines should be advised not to drive. However, we would like to point out that this is not the case with benzodiazepines used in compliance with a medical prescription as outlined in our current Sláinte agus Tiomáint Medical Fitness to Drive guidelines<sup>2</sup>, which reflect best clinical practice<sup>3</sup> and current legislation in this field. Nevertheless, patients should be warned by the prescriber about the potential effects of this class of prescription medication on their ability to drive safely and to ensure that they have adapted to the medication without excessive drowsiness prior to resuming driving.

The importance of greater awareness of considering impact of, and adaptation to, medications for drivers with mental health diagnoses was highlighted in Vartukapteine and O’Connell’s study (January 2020)<sup>4</sup>. We also recognize the need for ongoing continuing professional development in all branches of medicine, including education on psychotropic drugs and driving. As part of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, and with the support of the Road Safety Authority, we have developed a Certificate course in Traffic Medicine, which provides medical professionals with training in the use of the national guidelines and in decision-making around medical fitness to drive, including the effects of medications. We are also willing to provide support for educational modules in Traffic Medicine for undergraduate, postgraduate continuous professional education for any medical specialty in Ireland.

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**References:**

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2. Road Safety Authority. *Sláinte agus Tiomáint medical fitness to drive guidelines (Group 1 and 2 Drivers)*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ballina) Ireland: Road Safety Authority; 2019.
3. O'Neill D. Benzodiazepines and driver safety. *Lancet*. 1998; 352(9137):1324–1325.
4. Vartukapteine S, O'Connell H. Driving and psychotropic medications: What do Psychiatrists and service users really know? *Irish Medical Journal*. 2020; 113(1),10. Available from <http://imj.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Driving-and-Psychotropic-Medications-What-Do-Psychiatrists-and-Service-Users-Really-Know.pdf>