



 Editorial

Current Knowledge on Adolescent Driver Distraction

Motor vehicle collisions (crashes) are the leading cause of death to adolescents and are a major contributor to nonfatal injuries [1]. There are many contributors to crash-related morbidity and mortality of adolescents, such as inexperience and lack of skills, immaturity, and distraction [2–5]. Driver distraction is an important threat to the public health and safety of adolescent drivers, their passengers, and those with whom they share the public roadways. Currently, there is heightened awareness of driver distraction, motivated strongly by the media's interest in the effects on driving of using cell phones to talk or text; however, handheld devices are only one source of driver distraction, and many other causes of this perennial threat to motor vehicle safety exist and need to be addressed. Therefore, this supplement of the *Journal of Adolescent Health* examines distraction among young drivers broadly, rather than focusing narrowly on one or two sources of distraction, and addresses the topic in a manner that is relevant to both researchers and practitioners dedicated to enhancing the health, safety, and well-being of adolescents.

The Supplement begins with an article entitled “Adolescence, Attention Allocation, and Driving Safety” that examines key issues related to adolescent driver distraction from a developmental perspective with a focus on brain immaturity and driver inexperience [6]. This article suggests that the effects of inexperience and immaturity might be overcome with training that improves attention. The second article entitled “Neural Responses to Exclusion Predict Susceptibility to Social Influence” continues the focus on neural functioning and its association with adolescent drivers' reactions to peer expectations and norms [7]. It indicates that teens who have the greatest neural reactivity to social exclusion may be the most susceptible to risk taking while driving in the presence of peers. The focus on social influences is continued in the third article entitled “Social Norms and Risk Perception: Predictors of Distracted Driving Behavior Among Novice Adolescent Drivers,” which examines parents and peers as sources of direct and injunctive normative influences on distracted driving behavior and demonstrates the importance of role modeling by parents and the expectations of peers in adolescent distracted driving [8].

The fourth article shifts the focus to simulator-based studies and reports on the effects of peer influences on adolescent drivers' visual scanning behavior [9]. The article entitled “Peer

Passenger Influences on Adolescent Drivers' Visual Scanning Behavior During Simulated Driving” suggests that peer passenger presence might contribute to crash risk by increasing cognitive load, which results in reduced scanning and situational awareness while driving.

The fifth and sixth articles are based on driver observation, utilizing technology to examine naturalistic driving behaviors. “Distracted Driver Behaviors and Distracting Conditions Among Adolescent Drivers: Findings From a Naturalistic Driving Study” focuses on the frequency of adolescent driver engagement in distracting behaviors [10]. This article suggests that common assumptions about adolescent driver distraction may not be entirely true, and that the association of passengers with distraction is more complex than previously realized. “Keep Your Eyes on the Road: Young Driver Crash Risk Increases According to Duration of Distraction” tests the association between the length of time adolescent drivers look away from the forward roadway and their involvement in crashes and near crashes and demonstrates that eye glances away from the forward roadway to engage in secondary tasks increase the likelihood of crash/near crash and longer duration eye glances resulted in greater risk [11].

The last two articles change the focus away from the assessment of adolescent driver behavior and toward interventions to reduce adolescent driver distraction. The eighth article entitled “Young Driver Distraction: State of the Evidence and Directions for Behavior Change Programs” reviews the literature on young driver distraction, examines available evidence, and identifies directions for future research on the development of behavior change programs [12]. The article describes the intervention design process and the selection of target behavior, audience, theory, and delivery strategies. The final article entitled “The Impact of Michigan's Text Messaging Restriction on Motor Vehicle Crashes” presents results from an ongoing evaluation of laws restricting text messaging and driving. This article takes the additional novel approaches of examining the effects of such policies on crash involvement by comparing adolescent and adult drivers by levels of crash severity to gauge the public health impact of the policies on the most serious and costly crashes [13]. The results of this article suggest that the effectiveness of policies restricting cell phone use might be limited.

The articles in this supplement reflect ongoing research and current knowledge in the area of adolescent driver distraction and present some of the most up-to-date information on this

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topic that is currently available. As such, these articles not only provide current data but also provide pertinent information to guide ongoing efforts to better understand and prevent teen driver distraction and the morbidity and mortality they cause.

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