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Science News

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Elderly Drivers' Ability to Detect Hazards Doesn't Degrade With Age, Study Suggests

ScienceDaily (May 27, 2010) — A new study from the Human Factors Safety Laboratory at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) indicates that advanced age does not affect older drivers' ability to perceive hazards and that older drivers are more sensitive to potential hazards than young-inexperienced drivers.

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The Study suggests that driving experience improves drivers' awareness of potential hazards and these drivers focus more on potentially risky situations, such as approaching an intersection or pedestrians on a curb, than young drivers. It will be published in the July issue of *Accident Analysis & Prevention*.

The study involved 21 young-inexperienced, 19 experienced and 16 older drivers (37 years of experience) who viewed six hazard perception movies while connected to an eye tracking system and were requested to identify hazardous situations.

Four movies embedded planned, highly hazardous situations and the rest were used as control. The study showed that experienced and older-experienced drivers were equally proficient at hazard detection and detected potentially hazardous events continuously, whereas young-inexperienced drivers stopped reporting on hazards that followed planned, highly hazardous situations.

Moreover, while approaching T intersections, older and experienced drivers fixated more toward the merging road on the right, while young-inexperienced drivers fixated straight ahead, paying less attention to potential vehicles on the merging road.

According to BGU researcher Avinoam Borowsky, "We found that with older drivers, in general, their hazard perception abilities remained intact. However, they relied heavily on signs and signals (i.e. signals from other vehicles) to cope with the traffic environment. In their verbal comments, however, older drivers tended to claim that the other road users were responsible for putting them at risk and rarely considered themselves as responsible for hazardous events."

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The above story is reprinted (with editorial adaptations by ScienceDaily staff) from materials provided by **American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**, via **EurekAlert!**, a service of AAAS.

Journal Reference:

1. Borowsky et al. **Age, skill, and hazard perception in driving.** *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 2010; 42 (4): 1240 DOI: 10.1016/j.aap.2010.02.001

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APA American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (2010, May 27). Elderly drivers' ability to detect hazards doesn't degrade with age, study suggests. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved June 1, 2010, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100526111238.htm>

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