

**MINUTES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S HONORARY
MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL ON DRIVING AND DIABETES MELLITUS
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH OCTOBER 2009**

Present:	Professor B M Frier Dr Ann E Gold Professor J Saunders Dr D T E Cunnah Professor K M Shaw Dr E R Waclawski Dr M D Feher	Chairman
Lay Members:	Mrs Marilyn Jackson Mrs Barbara Hatton	
Ex Officio:	Dr R V Johnson Dr R Hunter Dr C Beattie Dr Heather Major Ms Pippa A Brown Dr Rebecca Rhodes Ms Jan Chandaman Mrs Suzanne Richards Dr S D R Rees	Civil Aviation Authority Civil Aviation Authority Occupational Health Service, N. Ireland Senior Medical Adviser & Head of Medical Licensing Policy Taxi and Accessibility Policy Branch, Buses and Taxis Division, DfT DfT Road Safety Research Team Drivers Policy Group, DVLA Development Group, DVLA Panel Secretary/Medical Adviser

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Dr T Crayford.
- 1.2 The Panel paid tribute to Dr Kenneth Macleod who died suddenly in July. He had served on this Panel since November 2006, and his ability, talent, enthusiasm and sense of humour will be sorely missed. The Panel would like to offer their condolences to his family.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as a true account of the proceedings on 17th March 2009.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

- 3.1 Ref. para 4.3. CoSAC requirements do allow Panel Chairmen to be recruited from within Panel membership.

Important: These advisory notes represent the balanced judgement of the Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel as a whole. If they are quoted, they should be reproduced as such and not as the views of individual Panel members.

3.2 Ref. para 5.1. An abstract intended as a poster presentation has been submitted for possible presentation at the Diabetes UK Annual Professional Conference in 2010.

4. Amendment to the minimum Health Standard set out in the Second Directive on Driving Licences (91/439/EC).

4.1 These proposals were adopted by the EC on 25 August 2009. Member States have one year from this date to comply with this Directive.

4.2 The Panel acknowledged that under the new proposals consideration may be given to issuing/renewing Group 2 licences to drivers with insulin-treated diabetes. The Panel advocated the principle of independent medical assessment for Group 2 drivers treated with insulin. The Panel also recommended developing a network of nominated Consultant Diabetologists who have expressed an interest to carry out such assessments to a required standard and agreed criteria. A report from the driver's Clinician should be made available to the independent specialist carrying out the assessments. LGV and PCV drivers would be subject to annual review.

5. Assessment of awareness of hypoglycaemia – method of Gold et al

5.1 The Panel advocated incorporating the method of Gold and colleagues (published in Diabetes Care 1994; 17:697-703) of assessing awareness of hypoglycaemia into the medical enquiry form which drivers are required to complete on application for or renewal of their licence.

6. Update on Coroners' reports and police notifications

6.1 DVLA is aware of 14 fatal road traffic collisions resulting from hypoglycaemia while driving that have occurred since 2005.

6.2 DVLA is continuing to receive around 24 police notifications per month of driving incidents associated with hypoglycaemia.

7. Blood glucose monitoring in drivers holding Group 1 entitlement (car/motorcycle) on non-insulin drug treatments

7.1 The Panel considered a letter from a driver with tablet-controlled diabetes with respect to advice on blood glucose monitoring. The Panel advised that for drivers on medication which is likely to cause hypoglycaemia, such as a sulphonylurea, it may be appropriate to monitor blood glucose regularly and at times relevant to driving to enable them to detect hypoglycaemia.

8. Research update

- 8.1 Dr Rebecca Rhodes advised the Panel that organisational and personnel changes at DfT had now been completed following the departure of Dr Lily Read. She will be concentrating on impairment aspects, in particular those related to alcohol, drugs and fatigue. Dr Liz Brutus (Clinical Adviser to Chief Medical Adviser, DfT) will be dealing with clinical aspects of the research programme.
- 8.2 The Panel was provided with a summary of the current and planned DfT research projects and advised that a new medical literature review service will shortly become available to support and inform the work of the Medical Advisory Panels. The Panel was informed that the list of reports published by the Road User Safety Division in 2008/2009 could be accessed using the link: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/evidenceplannedresearch0910.pdf>
- 8.3 The Chairman asked if a collaborative research proposal submitted previously by Dr S Heller regarding hypoglycaemia risk in people with diabetes could be retrieved and re-submitted. He also requested that an application form for research proposals could be forwarded to the Panel Secretary.

9. Literature Search

- 9.1 The Panel considered the paper “Road traffic accident risk in patients with diabetes mellitus receiving blood glucose-lowering drugs. *Diabetic Medicine* 2009; 26:404-408”. This was a prospective follow-up study of drivers with diabetes in Norway. The authors showed a slightly increased risk of being involved in a road traffic accident for drivers treated with insulin.
- 9.2 The Panel also considered the paper “Understanding, knowledge and attitudes towards current UK driving advice in insulin-treated diabetic patients. *Practical Diabetes International* 2009; 26:318-321”. The Panel were concerned that a large proportion of drivers who participated in the study felt that safety advice for driving, including blood glucose testing before driving, was often inconvenient and therefore considered it to be unacceptable. As a consequence many drivers were ignoring the advice. The Panel also voiced concern about the proportion of drivers on insulin who had a no-review licence (not period restricted), implying that DVLA had not been notified of their medical condition. Professor K Shaw has written an editorial commentary on this study which has been published in the same journal (*Principles of safe driving on insulin: the message is still not getting across. Practical Diabetes International* 2009; 26:316). This urges medical and nursing colleagues to ensure that the essential principles of safe driving for drivers using insulin are well understood and implemented by their patients.

10. Any other business

- 10.1 Advice on driving with diabetes which has been published by Diabetes UK in their journal “Diabetes Update” (Fact Sheet 54).

Some factual errors have been identified in this (unattributed) fact sheet and the Panel have requested that the Panel Secretary write to Diabetes UK to request that these are corrected.

- 10.2 Correspondence received by Professor K Shaw from a Consultant Diabetologist who had expressed concerns about some aspects of the investigative process of driving licence renewal for people with insulin-treated diabetes.

DVLA’s Senior Medical Adviser had replied to this letter. DVLA has since surveyed Clinicians to ascertain more clearly what type of information they would wish us to convey about their patients in respect of licensing fitness, in what format and under what circumstances. DVLA are currently in the process of analysing the results of this survey. This will be shown to the Panel at the next meeting and to the appropriate operational area within DVLA. Professor Shaw will discuss the views of the Panel with the Consultant Diabetologist concerned.

- 10.3 Advice to blue light drivers on insulin

The Panel will reconsider the advice in the ‘At a Glance Guide to the Current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive’ at the next Panel meeting in light of the changes to the minimum health standard set out in Annex III of the EC Directive and other discussions around occupational fitness.

- 10.4 Imminent retirement of the Senior Medical Adviser, Dr Heather Major

The Panel thanked Dr Major for her guidance, direction and support to the Panel and wished her a very happy retirement.

11. Date and time of next meetings

Tuesday, 9th March 2010

Wednesday, 29th September 2010

**DR S D R REES BSc MBBS
PANEL SECRETARY**