

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT'S
HONORARY MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL ON DRIVING AND
PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS
MONDAY 16th NOVEMBER 2009**

Present: Professor M Lader Chairman
Professor D G Cunningham Owens
Professor P Howlin
Professor G Lewis
Professor S Banerjee
Dr P Divall
Dr D Olajide
Miss P Steel
Mrs J Gall

Ex-Officio: Dr T Crayford Chief Medical Adviser, DfT
Dr P Collins Howgill CAA
Ms J Chandaman Medical Policy, DVLA
Dr K Harrison Medical Adviser, DVLA
Dr A White Panel Secretary, DVLA

Invited Speaker: Dr Hugh Herzig Consultant Psychiatrist
STEPs Eating Disorder Service

The meeting commenced at 13.00 hours.

Item 1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from:

Dr C Campbell Medical Adviser DVLNI
Ms S Richards Medical Planning, DVLA

Item 2. Welcome to the new Panel member.

The Chairman welcomed Professor Glyn Lewis of Bristol. Professor Lewis has particular expertise in epidemiology and will be a valuable asset to the Panel.

The Panel also extended its thanks to Dr Heather Major, who recently retired from the position of Senior Medical Adviser at DVLA. The Panel wished to recognise her many years of dedicated service and advice to the Secretary of State's Panels.

The Chairman welcomed Dr Hugh Herzig from the Bristol Eating Disorders Service to the meeting.

Item 3. Matters arising from the Chairmen's meeting held on 4th Feb. 2009.

3.1 The Chairman indicated that these meetings were particularly valuable as they allowed discussion around common areas of concern to all the Secretary of State's Advisory Panels. Clarification was sought on the proposed changes resulting from the adoption of the European Union Commission Directive 2009/113/EC of 25th August 2009. It was explained that following implementation of the Directive there would be harmonisation of medical standards across Europe, in the areas of vision, diabetes and epilepsy. Explanation was also provided regarding a recent High Court decision in favour of DVLA/DfT relating to a case involving the current vision standards.

3.2 A request was made for more information regarding the topics that were discussed be provided to panel members. It was felt that this might avoid ambiguity and uncertainty when viewed by members who were not present at the meeting.

Item 4. Minutes of the last meeting held 10th November 2008.

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings on the 10th November 2008 and were signed by the Chairman.

Item 5. Matters arising from the minutes.

The Panel strongly expressed its concern over the continuing delay in the publication of Dr Carol Hawley's research on "The Attitudes of Health Professionals to Advising Patients on Medical Aspects of Fitness to Drive".

Item 6. Presentation by Dr Hugh Herzig on Eating Disorders.

The Panel received a presentation by Dr Hugh Herzig, a Consultant Psychiatrist on Eating Disorders at Bristol, regarding eating disorders and driving. The presentation was informative and provoked a wide-ranging discussion. The Panel decided that rather than adopt a simple metric e.g. Body Mass Index (BMI) to determine the ability to hold a driving licence, it would be more appropriate to consider an holistic assessment. This should require an appropriate period of stability of relevant factors including but not exclusively mental health, nutritional intake, weight and blood chemistry. It was felt that the current "At a Glance Guide to the current Medical standards of Fitness to drive" did not reflect current clinical practice and would therefore be amended. It was recognised that the information regarding the risk of accidents in the presence of eating disorders was limited. The Panel was reminded of the current obligations under the revised GMC confidentiality guidelines.

Item 7. Review of M2VOC questionnaires

The panel discussed the investigative process and questionnaires used when a licence holder declared a history of mental health problems. The questionnaires were originally designed to reflect the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and to separate the more significantly affected licence holder from the less severely affected. The importance of the Medical Advisers role & judgement was emphasised in cases involving mental health, some disquiet was expressed over the role of algorithms in determining a licensing decision in complex mental health cases.

DVLA was able to reassure the Panel that cases where there was uncertainty would continue to be reviewed by a medical professional.

A long discussion around the processes and medical questionnaires took place; the importance of ongoing review of these was emphasised. It was explained that the processes & forms had been under constant review over the past ten years and that in general few problems had arisen that directly attributable to these. The Panel did not recommend any changes to the questionnaires.

Item 8. Cases for discussion.

- 8.1 Two cases were discussed by the Panel, firstly a Group 1 driver with recurrent bipolar illness who had discontinued treatment after licensing. There was a strong history of recurrent illness with poor insight during a relapse. It was decided that the risk of recurrent illness without treatment was sufficient to preclude licensing and that the Group 1 licence should be revoked.
- 8.2 The second case concerned a Group 1 driver with a diagnosis of a schizoaffective disorder who was subject to a restriction order whilst an in-patient. It was the Panel's decision that he should not be licensed at this stage.
- 8.3 Clarification was sought by the Panel as to whether a licence would be directly returned to a driver who had not been actively driving for some years due to mental health issues without a further assessment of their driving ability. It was confirmed that unless concerns were expressed over the licence holder's ability to drive such that they should be referred for either a FORUM on-road assessment or Driving Standards Agency driving test, then a licence would be returned without further formal re-testing.

Item 9. Research update.

- 9.1 Dr Rebecca Rhodes advised that organisational and personnel changes at DfT had now been completed. She would 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.
- 9.2 The Panel was provided with a summary of the current and planned DfT research projects and advised that a new medical literature review service would 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 at <http://www/dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/evidenceplannedresearch0910.pdf>
- 9.3 The Panel was also informed that the Department intended commissioning a large database for research purposes, that would have potential to form a large epidemiological resource for the future.
- 9.4 Dr Crayford reminded the Panel that, despite the well-publicised fiscal restraints on Government spending medical research was still ongoing and that consideration could be given to projects in the next financial year, particularly if they are consistent with the Department's prime responsibility to reduce deaths on the road.
- 9.5 Professor Lader requested the Panel to direct any proposals for research projects via the Chair.

Item 10. Annual Report 2008.

The Panel received the annual report.

Item 11. Any other business.

On behalf of the Civil Aviation Authority Dr Collins Howgill asked the Panel if it would be possible for the Consultant Psychiatric Adviser to the CAA, Dr Peter Haydon-Smith, to attend in the capacity of an observer. This proposal was welcomed and an invitation was extended to Dr Haydon-Smith.

Item 12. Dates and time of next meeting.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as the 15th November 2010. It was confirmed that meetings would be annually in the Autumn, unless pressing need required an additional Spring meeting.

The meeting closed at 15.20 hrs.

DR A M WHITE MB BCH
PANEL SECRETARY.

24th November 2009