

Two-pronged intervention boosts senior driving skills

Older drivers who couple classroom courses with behind-the-wheel training can significantly improve their driving performance, according to a report published in the latest issue of *The Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences* (Vol. 62A, No. 10).

A recent study spearheaded by Yale University's Richard Marottoli examined 126 drivers aged 70 or older. Those who underwent eight hours of classroom instruction and two hours of behind-the-wheel training (based in part on AAA's Driver Improvement Program) scored better on subsequent tests than those who did not.

Participants were assessed on skills such as scanning side and rear views; backing up, making left turns, and changing lanes; speed regulation; and seat belt, mirror, and turn signal use.

Motor vehicle crashes are among the leading causes of accidental injury and death among individuals aged 65 or greater, with much higher rates of injury, hospitalization, and death than among younger people in crashes of similar severity.

The research findings offer hope to a broad spectrum of drivers that an easily implemented intervention can enhance their driving performance and potentially prolong their safe driving years - thereby maintaining their independence.

Source: The Gerontological Society of America

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