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Display Settings: Abstract

Ther Umsch. 2011 May;68(5):253-9.

[Driving ability and daytime sleepiness].

[Article in German]

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Abstract

Daytime sleepiness is a complaint of about 5-10% in a normal population. The consequences, such as impaired performance and accidents at the workplace and while driving, have major impact on the affected and on society. According to Swiss federal statistics only 1-3% of all motor vehicle accidents are due to excessive daytime sleepiness, which is in great contrast to a figure of 10 to 20% of all accidents derived from scientific studies. Due to the inadequate statistical representation of the problem, insufficient countermeasures have been realized, and the state of drivers breaching traffic regulations is not adequately investigated in this respect. The most prevalent cause of microsleep induced accidents is certainly lack of sleep due to social or professional reasons. A treating physician must also consider sedating drugs and various diseases. The typical characteristics of accidents due to falling asleep at the wheel and the risk factors involved are well established, so that informing the general public, taking prophylactic countermeasures and a targeted investigation in this respect of drivers who have breached the law are all feasible. Since symptoms of sleepiness can be recognized well before any impairment of performance occurs, the most important countermeasure is information of the drivers on the risk factors and on efficient countermeasures against sleepiness at the wheel. Besides correct diagnosis and treatment, the primary goal of physicians treating patients with pathological daytime sleepiness is to inform them at an early stage about the risks of sleepiness and the large responsibility they bear while driving. This information should be written down in the patients' records. Professional drivers suffering from daytime sleepiness, drivers who have already had an accident due to microsleep and unreasonable drivers should be referred to a centre of **sleep disorders** for objective measurements of sleepiness.

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Publication Types, MeSH Terms

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