

Surgeon warns Australian drivers 65+ to be aware

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New research has discovered an increase in fatal and serious road accidents for drivers 65-74 years of age and 75 years of age and above.

Analysing Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) data between 2007 and 2018, Dr Gratian Punch from Lismore Base Hospital, discovered road fatalities for drivers 65–74 years of age and 75 years of age plus, have increased 2.3 per cent and 1.2 per cent per annum respectively.

They are the only age groups to show a positive average trend change per annum since 2007.

Current BITRE data showed road related hospitalisations from injury for 65-74 and 75+ year olds has increased 9 per cent in comparison to 1.8 per cent for their younger counterparts.

Dr Punch said the stereotypical belief is young male drivers are the biggest contributor to national fatal and serious injury crash statistics, however little attention is dedicated to the growing sub-group of drivers aged 65 years of age and above.

“As a community we need to have a conversation about older and elderly road users and increase awareness of this concerning trend,” Dr Punch said.

“The goal is to have zero fatalities on our roads and it’s really concerning that road fatality percentages for drivers 65 years of age and over is increasing, not going down like every other age bracket.

“We’re an aging population, so there’s going to continually be more and more older drivers on the road. It’s essential that everyone takes responsibility for the own safety and the safety of the wider community by regularly consulting with their GP to assess their driving fitness.”

In conjunction with Dr Tony Pang, Associate Professor Vincent Lam and Associate Professor Arthur Richardson, Dr Punch will be making a verbal presentation on Thursday 10 May at the upcoming RACS Annual Scientific Congress, which will detail the methods, results and conclusion of their studies.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), in partnership with the American College of Surgeons (ACS), is hosting its 87th Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) this year at the Sydney International Convention Centre from 7-11 May for a series of workshops, discussions, plenaries and masterclasses.

For more information about the RACS Annual Scientific Congress please visit: <https://asc.surgeons.org/>

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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Media inquiries:

Gabrielle Forman, Communications & Policy Officer
t: +61 3 9276 7430 | m: +61 498 218 008