

Survey on Health Status of Heavy Vehicle Drivers in Klang Valley

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Summary

A survey was carried out using a medical examination format that was prepared by the Malaysian Medical Association. The findings of the survey show that of the 266 cases surveyed, 64 drivers (24% of cases surveyed) are either totally unfit to drive or temporarily unfit to drive heavy goods and passenger vehicles. This is clear indication that the current format that is being used by the Road Transport Department is inadequate and needs to be reviewed. It must also be stressed that all the above 64 drivers have been certified fit using the existing Road Transport Department format and are currently driving in our highways and roads. Heavy vehicle goods and passenger vehicle drivers if not properly examined and medically certified are not only be endangering their own lives but also that of others. It is therefore recommended that based on the data available from this survey, the Road Transport Department should seriously consider adopting the medical examination format that was formalised by the Malaysian Medical Association and used in this survey.

Key Words: Medical fitness, Heavy vehicle drivers, Klang valley, New medical Evaluation format

Introduction

The medical profession has long expressed concern over the medical examination format used by the Road Transport Department (RTD) for evaluating the health status of motor vehicle drivers in general and that of the heavy vehicle goods drivers in particular, primarily because the medical profession felt that the current format used was inadequate especially in evaluating the health status of these drivers. It was felt that such drivers if not examined properly may not only be a danger to themselves but may endanger the lives of others, especially if they are passenger vehicle drivers. On this basis the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) and the Road Transport Department undertook to conduct a survey primarily to evaluate the health status of current heavy vehicle goods drivers using the medical examination format proposed by MMA.

Methods

The survey commenced on 15th December 1995. A total of 226 drivers who came for renewal of their driving licenses and other fresh applicants were randomly selected by the RTD and taken to clinics located in Damansara and Shah Alam. MMA members who had volunteered examined these drivers using the medical examination format prepared by the MMA.

Results

Of the 266 drivers who were examined 191 (72%) were found medically fit to drive. The remaining 75 (28%) drivers who were found to be not medically fit to drive had some form of medical problem or problems. These have been identified into six categories namely :

SHORT COMMUNICATION

- 1) Those with vision problems alone - 6 drivers (8%). Of these, 3 drivers had correctable vision and the remaining 3 should be declared unfit to drive due to cataract (1 case), Mono ocular vision (1 case) and very poor vision, i.e. able to count fingers only (1 case).
- 2) Those with hypertension alone - 26 drivers (35%). Of these, 25 can be treated with medications, while the remaining one driver was found to be a young hypertensive with very high blood pressure who should be declared unfit to drive.
- 3) Those with Diabetes alone - drivers (17%). There were no drivers who were insulin dependent. There were 5 drivers who were known diabetics on medication but who were not well controlled. There were 8 new cases of diabetes that need to be investigated and treated.
- 4) Those with other problems - 10 drivers (13%). There were 2 drivers who were less than 5 feet tall and should be declared unfit. This constitutes 20% of the total cases in this category. There was one driver who had a non-treatable deformity of the left hand. However it could not be determined if this deformity was severe enough to prevent this driver from driving. There were two drivers with Bronchial Asthma, another two drivers with a history of Migraine, one driver with complaints of renal stone, and another two drivers with albumin in their urine. All these drivers have treatable conditions and need to be monitored regularly, after treatment.
- 5) Those with multiple problems - 9 drivers (12%). Of these two (22.2% of the total cases) in this category had such severe medical conditions that they should be declared unfit to drive heavy vehicles. These two drivers had the following multiple problems respectively :

- i) vision problem
hypertension
albuminuria
colour blindness
night blindness

- ii) hypertension
hearing loss even with hearing aid.

The remaining 7 drivers had multiple medical problems, all of which are treatable. Their respective medical problems are :

- iii) colour blindness
hypertension
diabetes
 - iv) diabetes
history of migraine
 - v) diabetes
hypertension
 - vi) diabetes
hypertension
 - vii) history of renal stone
hypertension
 - viii) vision problem
glycosemia
 - ix) hypertension
vision problem
- 6) Examination Forms with incomplete data - 11 drivers (14.6%). No conclusions could be drawn from these forms, but the issues include history of fracture but no deformity specified - one driver; no blood pressure taken - three drivers; no vision tests performed - two drivers; and incomplete vision testing done - five drivers.

Conclusions

Of the 75 drivers whose medical examination forms highlighted problems (Figure 1)

- 11 were inconclusive due to incomplete data (This constitutes 4.1% of the total cases surveyed)
- 8 should be declared medically unfit to drive heavy vehicles (This constitutes 3.00% of the total cases surveyed)

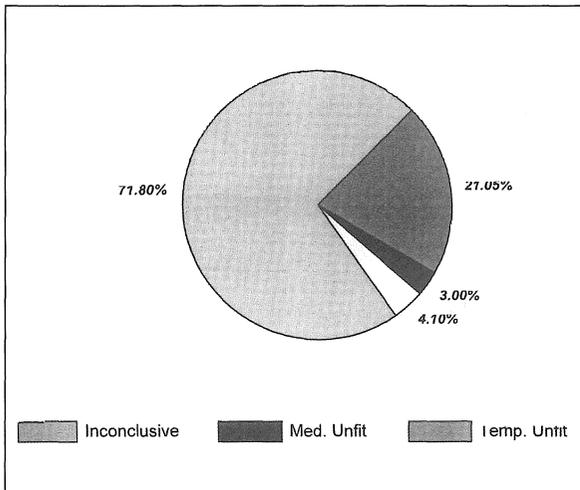


Fig. 1: Conclusions of medical fitness to drive based on medical examination of 266 drivers surveyed

- 56 should be declared temporarily unfit to drive until their medical conditions are stabilised or treated (This constitutes 21.05% of the total cases surveyed)

Based on this survey a guideline for doctors intending to perform Medical Examination for heavy goods vehicles have been finalised and endorsed by the Road Transport Department.

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