OLDER DRIVERS, FAMILIES AND GPs: NAVIGATING THE PATH BETWEEN MOBILITY AND SAFETY

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**Introduction** Most older New Zealanders travel by private car and continuing to drive is key to maintaining mobility, independence, and quality of life. Ceasing to drive, and the associated loss of independent mobility, can have serious negative consequences for older people’s health and well-being. It is also important, for their own wellbeing and that of others, that older drivers remain as safe as possible. Although older drivers have relatively few crashes, due to frailty they have high fatality rates, especially those aged 75+ years. By 2036, 1 in 4 New Zealanders will be 65+ years (currently 1 in 7). Road related fatalities and injuries for those aged 65+ years are estimated to increase by 71% in the same period due to the combination of an ageing population, growth in traffic, and growth in the number of workers over 65 years. A multi-faceted approach is required to address the needs of an ageing population, balancing safety and mobility.

**Research Summary***:* The Older Driver Study (HRC Project, 2015-2018) is a mixed method study. Older drivers, their families, and GPs will be interviewed to better understand travel patterns, driving behaviours, and fitness-to-drive issues. The findings will help develop evidence-based policy and programmes to address mobility and safety, to 1) assist older drivers to maintain independence through driving for as long as safely possible; and 2) identify assistance needed by drivers and support networks to manage driving cessation and minimise negative consequences.

**Future Directions:** The older driver interview will form the baseline for a proposed prospective cohort study of older drivers. This longitudinal study will allow drivers to be followed through the transition from driver to non-driver and will determine the predictors and ongoing consequences of driving reduction, self-regulation and cessation on economic, social, psychological, and health outcomes.

**Full list of Project Investigators**

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