The effect of medical conditions on fitness to drive and crash risk has long been recognised. Therefore doctors and other health professionals play an important role in public health and safety when advising patients about fitness to drive and when providing information to driver licensing authorities to support their decision making in this regard. Various forms support communication between the doctor, patient and driver licensing authority.

The national medical standards, Assessing Fitness to Drive, were first developed in 1998 in order to support consistent management of medical conditions with respect to driving. The new edition is expected to be available in 2012. These standards clearly state the applicable medical criteria for licensing for private and commercial licences.

The requirements in terms of forms and administrative processes vary depending on the circumstances in which the general practitioner is considering fitness to drive – for example, depending on whether the assessment is at the request of the driver licensing authority or whether it is being conducted during the general course of treatment. Requirements may also vary between states and territories, so specific advice should be sought from the local driver licensing authority (Table 1).

There are also varying requirements for assessments conducted for accreditation of drivers of public passenger vehicles or vehicles carrying dangerous goods.

When conducting an assessment at the request of a driver licensing authority

A driver licensing authority may request an assessment of a person’s fitness to drive. This request will generally be made via the patient, who may have reported a medical condition to the licensing authority at the time of licence application or renewal, or may be seeking review of a conditional licence. A request may also come following a crash or other incident if a medical cause is suspected.

When conducting an assessment at the request of a driver licensing authority, the key form is the Medical Report form. This form is issued to the driver by the licensing authority. The patient returns the completed form to the licensing authority following the assessment. These forms are different in each state/territory, however they generally seek information about:

- whether the medical criteria for licensing are met (being specific about whether the criteria for the particular condition(s) are met or not met)
- whether there are additional assessment requirements (such as specialist assessment, occupational therapist assessment or other practical driver assessment), and
- what conditions or restrictions might apply
to the person’s continued driving, including requirements for periodic review.

For privacy reasons, only medical information relevant to the patient’s fitness to drive should be included on this form.

The original of the medical report should be provided to the patient to return to the driver licensing authority and a copy should be kept on file in the patient’s medical record.

As the patient generally returns the medical report to the driver licensing authority, there is no need for signed consent in this regard. The patient may, however, be asked by the driver licensing authority to provide signed consent to enable communication with the examining health professional to secure additional information relevant to their fitness to drive.

While health professionals may provide information about whether or not patients meet the medical criteria to hold a driver’s licence, it is the licensing authority that makes the final decision about licensing, based on consideration of a range of information, including the person’s driving record.

**When assessing fitness to drive in the course of patient treatment**

Fitness to drive is also likely to be a common consideration in the course of general patient management, particularly for conditions such as cognitive impairment, epilepsy and other neurological conditions, as well as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, sleep disorders, substance misuse, and psychiatric disorders.

If, in the course of treatment, the GP considers that a patient’s condition may impact on their ability to drive safely, they should, in the first instance, encourage the patient to report their condition to a driver licensing authority. A standard form, the Medical Condition Notification form, may be used for this purpose. This form is contained in Assessing Fitness to Drive and may also be downloaded separately from the Austroads website at www.austroads.com.au.

The original form should be provided to the patient to return to the driver licensing authority and a copy kept in the medical file.

Some states have legislation requiring mandatory reporting by health professionals (South Australia, Northern Territory). In states or territories without mandatory reporting, the health professional may feel obliged to make a report directly to the driver licensing authority if they feel the patient has disregarded advice to cease driving and poses a safety threat. The Medical Condition Notification form may be used for this purpose. Most driver licensing authorities will also accept a letter in place of this form.

Note that such reporting is not required for temporary conditions. Temporary conditions

<table>
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<th>Table 1. Australian driver licensing authorities</th>
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| **ACT** | Licensing and Registration Team  
Road User Services  
PO Box 582, Dickson ACT 2602  
Telephone 02 6205 1577 |
| **NSW** | Manager – Licence Review Unit  
RTA Driver Administration Section  
Locked Bag 14, Grafton NSW 2460  
Telephone 02 6640 2821 Fax 02 6640 2894  
Email RTA_Contact_Centre@rta.nsw.gov.au |
| **NT** | Department of Lands and Planning  
Manager Licensing and Compliance  
GPO Box 530, Darwin NT 0801  
Telephone 08 8999 3108 Fax 08 8999 3103  
Email mvr@nt.gov.au  
www.dlp.nt.gov.au |
| **QLD** | Senior Manager – Transport Policy  
Driver Licensing  
PO Box 673, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006  
Telephone 07 3252 4129 Fax 07 3253 4110 |
| **SA** | Manager – Driver Licensing  
Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure  
GPO Box 1533, Adelaide SA 5001  
Telephone 08 8402 1946 Fax 08 8402 1977 |
| **TAS** | Medical Review Officer  
Registration and Licensing Branch  
Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources  
GPO Box 1002, Hobart TAS 7001  
Telephone 03 6233 5221 |
| **VIC** | VicRoads Medical Review  
60 Denmark Street  
Kew VIC 3101  
Telephone 03 9854 2390  
Email medicalreview@roads.vic.gov.au  
www.vicroads.vic.gov.au |
| **WA** | Team Leader Driver Assessment Section  
Department of Transport  
GPO Box R1290, Perth WA 6844  
Telephone 08 9216 8382 Fax 08 9216 8178  
Email driver.assessment@transport.wa.gov.au  
www.transport.wa.gov.au |
do not impact on licence status but the patient should be advised not to drive until the temporary situation is resolved.

**Reinstatement of licences or removal of conditions or restrictions**

The medical condition of a patient who has previously been unlicensed or placed on a conditional licence may improve so that their licensing status warrants reconsideration, for example, the condition is resolved through treatment.

In these circumstances a letter or notification to this effect from the treating GP will prompt the driver licensing authority to consider reinstating the appropriate licence or removing licence restrictions.

The Medical Condition Notification form should be used for this purpose. It guides the GP in providing the information needed by the licensing authority to reconsider the licensing status.

**Record keeping**

General practitioners should maintain appropriate records of fitness to drive assessments, including forms, in case further information is required by the driver licensing authority.

**Resources**

- Austroads website: www.austroads.com.au which includes:
  - electronic copy of Assessing Fitness to Drive
  - downloadable Medical Condition Notification form
  - patient information resources.

**Author**

Fiona Landgren BPharm, GradDipHospPharm, is Principal Consultant, Project Health, Melbourne, Victoria. info@cfh.com.au.

Conflict of interest: Fiona Landgren holds a contract with Austroads to promote awareness and educate health professionals regarding assessing fitness to drive.

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The new edition of Assessing Fitness to Drive is due for release in 2012. All registered GPs in Australia will receive a mailed copy.