Provider Opinion: Should We Screen and Counsel Parents of Teen Drivers Regarding Texting/Distracted Driving?

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Provider Opinion:
Should we screen and counsel parents of teen drivers regarding texting/distracted driving?

Dan Lambert
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Dr. Richard Baker MD
Problem Identification and description of need

- In 2015, 2,333 teens in the United States ages 16-19 were killed and 221,313 were treated in emergency departments for injuries suffered in motor vehicle crashes in 2014. That means that six teens ages 16-19 died every day from motor vehicle injuries.

- A recent study in 2013 showed that in the 15-19 age group, 10% of all fatal accidents were attributed to secondary distraction. Highest of all age groups.

- Investigation into driving habits of 83 high school aged students revealed a 58% prevalence of distracted driving.
  - These behaviors were increased by:
    - Friend’s risky driving habits
    - Parental limitations on driving
    - Social norms

- In 2014, the CDC reported that 39.6% of all cause mortality in the 10-24 year old age group was unintentional accidents.

- There is a clear need to reduce the amount of distracted driving in the adolescent age group.
In 2013, adolescents between 15-19 year old represented only 7% of the U.S. population. However, they accounted for 11% ($10 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries.

In Vermont, 33% of high school aged children reported texting or emailing while driving.
- Significant decrease from 35% in 2013

Rutland county high school students have comparable rates of distracted driving to other counties.
- Increasing rate as students move from junior to senior year (43 vs 58 %)
- Suggests behavior modification could mitigate risk and decrease prevalence
Community Opinion

- There was a unanimous opinion that texting and driving in adolescents is a problem but not necessarily something providers would screen parents for.

- When asked which methods would be most effective:
  - “I think providing parents with mobile apps that control their children’s usage during driving would be an effective approach.” - Dr. Richard Baker MD
  - “I would like to see a pamphlet highlighting the risks and showing how many teens actually do engage in the behavior.” - Dr. Mark Messier MD
Intervention and Methodology

- Initial measures will be created based on the results of surveying family medicine practitioners in the Rutland Community Health Center.
- Further measures will be to employ their suggestions within the clinic.
- Possible interventions on the survey include:
  - A pamphlet highlighting the risks and possible mobile apps to limit teenage texting and driving early on.
  - Providing mobile app information and how they can limit texting.
  - Other suggestions.
Survey results showed:

- 100% of the family medicine practitioners interviewed agreed that distracted driving is a problem in adolescents
- 66% of the family medicine practitioners interviewed believed it was worth screening parents with adolescent drivers
- There was a split on what would be most helpful measure:
  - 33% voting for pamphlets that could be given to parents highlighting the risks
  - 66% believed that mobile app education would be more effective

Considering that a pamphlet/poster could contain mobile app information and risks of distracted driving, it would be easy enough to combine the two interventions
Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

- Intervention effectiveness will be measured by:
  - Follow up clinic visits asking if parents found the information helpful
  - Implementing improvements and suggestion
  - Monitoring teenage distracted driving prevalence within Rutland county through the Vermont department of health statistics

- Limitations include:
  - Difficulty implementing new screening technique in a time constrained visit
    - Noted as one provider didn’t believe they would screen parents
  - Effective mobile apps require monthly fees which would limit their use in lower socioeconomic groups
  - Hard to effectively measure whether intervention is the sole contributor to reduced distracted driving in teenagers
Recommendations for Future Interventions

- Future directions will be discovered as follow up feedback is obtained
- Other potential interventions include:
  - Monetary motivation not to text and drive
    - This has been proven to be effective in prior behavioral modification studies
    - Some mobile apps create driving pledges that provide rewards during periods of distraction free driving
  - Screening adolescents themselves during visits and educating them on risks of texting while driving
  - Receiving government assistance to create a mobile app that is free making it more accessible to all parents
References


