

Please Stop Him from Driving

School of Medicine – Transition to Residency – Professionalism, Ethics & Law

Hiram Brown is an 82-year-old, retired, long-distance truck driver with hypertension, osteoarthritis, and cataracts. You are his primary care physician. He values his independence, including living alone in his own home and driving. He takes walks, does crossword puzzles, and visits friends. He drives a newer Lincoln Town Car, which he is very proud of.

His 35-year-old granddaughter calls and says he has a checkup with you today. She says he accelerated backwards out of the garage and scraped the entire passenger side of his car against a telephone pole near the curb. She also notes that the driver's-side mirror is broken and there is a gash in the garage doorframe. All of this has taken place in the last month. She's "afraid he's going to kill somebody" and is glad no children were in the sidewalk when he backed up and grazed the telephone pole. She says you can tell him that she called you about this.

On physical exam his vital signs are within normal range. However, he has only 30 degrees of neck rotation due to osteoarthritis of the cervical spine. His visual acuity screen is 20/40 with his glasses on. You cannot reliably assess his peripheral vision. The remainder of his exam, including hearing, neurologic exam, and Mini-Mental State, is normal. He has not had any disturbances of consciousness and does not use alcohol or sedating drugs. However, you are concerned about his safety and the safety of others when he is driving.

You tell him about your conversation with his granddaughter and advise him to stop driving. He is peevish and argumentative. He says that unless he can drive, he'll just "sit at home and rot." He reminds you that he passed his driver's test two year ago and has not had any reported accidents.

After he leaves, his granddaughter calls and asks if you're going to report him to the DMV.

- 1. What are your obligations to report him? How would you do it?**
- 2. What do you say to him? His granddaughter?**