

## Faculty of Pain Medicine Guidance

### Drug Driving Regulations – Changes to the Law

The government has announced primary legislation that will create a new offence of driving with a specified drug in the body above the accepted limit for that drug. The new regulations are expected to come into force in March 2015 and include a 'zero tolerance' approach to 8 drugs associated with illegal use and 8 drugs associated with medical uses. The 'zero tolerance' group included Cannabis (THC), Ketamine and Diamorphine. Some benzodiazepines (including Clonazepam and Diazepam), Methadone and Morphine are included in the medical drug category, and have blood limits set at a higher level than the 'zero tolerance' group. The higher limits are generally above the normal therapeutic range, however those on high doses could test above the specified limit for that drug.

For patients who are prescribed drugs in either category, the government has included a statutory medical defence. If the police are satisfied that a driver is taking the relevant medicine on the advice of a healthcare professional and in accordance with written instructions they will not be prosecuted. It may be helpful for patients to keep suitable evidence with them when they are driving.

The statutory medical defence will not apply if the patients driving is impaired due to drugs, and patients should still be warned not to drive if this is the case. Although it is the responsibility of the driver to consider whether their driving is, or might be impaired on any given occasion, it is the responsibility of prescribers to give suitable clinical advice to patients regarding the risks of their medicines. This advice should include:

- Not to drive if symptoms or signs develop suggesting their driving may be impaired (such as sleepiness, poor coordination, impaired or slow thinking, dizziness or visual problems).
- Not to drive at times when the risk may be temporarily increased (for example when first starting or when increasing or reducing the dose of a medication that may impair driving).

- To take care in circumstances that may increase the risk of their driving being impaired, such as:
  - If additional medication that may impair driving is added (whether prescribed or over the counter medication)
  - If there is a developing medical condition that may increase the risk of impairing side-effects
  - If additional medication is started that is known to alter the metabolism of their existing drugs
- To be aware that alcohol when taken in combination with other impairing drugs can substantially increase the risk of accidents.

It is strongly recommended that clinicians read the detailed guidance for healthcare professionals that is available on the Department for Transport website

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/325275/healthcare-profs-drug-driving.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/325275/healthcare-profs-drug-driving.pdf)