Abstract Title: Driving Reaction Time Versus Computerized Reaction Time Deficits Following Concussion: Implications for Return to Driving Recommendations

Objective: To compare simulated driving reaction time (RT) between concussed and control individuals and examine Driving-RTs relationship with computerized neurocognitive testing RT (CNT-RT).

Authors: Landon Bryce Lempke¹, Robert Lynall¹, Nicole Hoffman², Hannes Devos³, Julianne Schmidt¹
¹University of Georgia, ²Illinois State University, ³University of Kansas Medical Center

Background: Concussed patients have impaired RT and neurocognition following injury that may linger and impair driving performance. Limited research has used direct methods to assess driving-RT post-concussion.

Design/Methods: We employed a cross-sectional laboratory study among 14 concussed and 14 healthy age, sex, and driving experience-matched controls (female: 60%; Age: 20.3 ± 1.1 years). Participants completed driving-RT and CNT-RT (CNS Vital Signs) within 48 hours of asymptomatic (15.9 ± 9.8 days post-concussion). Driving-RT consisted of two simulated driving scenarios: Stoplight (green to yellow stoplight change) and Pedestrian (child running in front of vehicle). CNT-RT outcomes included: simple-, complex-, Stroop-, and composite-RT. Independent t-tests and Hedges’ g effect sizes assessed between-group RT differences (seconds), and Pearson correlation coefficients examined relationships between driving-RT and CNT-RT (α = 0.05) outcomes.

Results: Concussed participants demonstrated slower complex-RT than controls (mean difference: 0.06s; 95% CI: 0.11, 0.01; p = 0.03; g = 0.86). No other driving- or CNT-RT outcomes were statistically significant (p ≥ 0.06), but Stoplight- (p = 0.13; g = 0.61) and Pedestrian-RT (p = 0.40; g = 0.36) demonstrated low- to high-magnitude effects for concussed deficits. Complex-, Stroop-, and composite-RT moderately correlated with Stoplight-RT (p < 0.05; r = 0.51, 0.48, 0.52, respectively). No other significant correlations existed between any driving- and CNT-RT outcomes (p > 0.05; r range: -0.19, 0.05).

Conclusions: Post-concussion driving- and CNT-RT outcomes overall normalized once asymptomatic, but complex-RT and large magnitude effects may indicate lingering deficits. Driving- and CNT-RT measures moderately correlated with each other, but a lack of strong correlation likely indicates driving responsiveness is not thoroughly assessed using traditional CNT post-concussion, which may have vital driving safety implications.