

Legislative requirements for health care personnel:

Health Personnel Act, Section 34. Information in connection with driver's licences and pilot licences

Medical practitioners, psychologists or optometrists who find that a patient holding a driver's licence for motor vehicles or a pilot licence for aircraft does not fulfil the necessary medical requirements, shall encourage the patient to hand in his licence. If the patient's medical condition is presumed not to be of a temporal nature, the health personnel as mentioned, shall report this to the public authorities in accordance with further provisions laid down by the Ministry in regulations.

Supervision in Vestfold:

Patients who are a danger in the traffic

For the first time, the Norwegian Board of Health in a county has investigated how the legislation relating to the duty to report in connection with the health requirements for having a driving licence is practised. The method used was system audit. We carried out supervision of two sections of psychiatry services in the county of Vestfold, the pain clinic and the department of geriatrics in Vestfold Hospital, and five regular general practitioners chosen using geographic and other criteria.

Supervision showed that none of the institutions, and none of the doctors or psychologists we contacted, carried out the investigations or sent the reports that are required according to the legislation.

We found several examples of patients with medical conditions that involve a great risk for driving, and patients who used large amounts

of medication that influence their ability to drive, but who still had a valid driving licence. In addition, the patients were not adequately informed about the dangers of driving when they had taken these types of medication.

The health care personnel we talked to were aware of the traffic risks, and that they were not fulfilling their duties in this area. However, many clinicians felt that this is a difficult topic to take up. Clinicians are dependent on having a relationship of trust with their patients. The issue of driving licences is often a sensitive issue for patients. So they get to keep their driving licence, even if they clearly do not meet the health requirements.

At the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision in Vestfold, we believe that we have a duty to shed light on this theme. So, in following up this supervision, we will correspond with the central authorities, and we will offer a course for doctors in Vestfold.