

## Traffic Safety

Leonard Evans. Bloomfield Hills MI: Science Servicing Society, 2004. 444 pp. \$99.50. ISBN: 0-975-48710-8.

The public health implications of traffic safety are grossly underrated, according to Leonard Evans, PhD, author of *Traffic Safety*. Evans, also author of the book *Traffic Safety and the Driver*, has eloquently described and analyzed a wide variety of traffic safety issues in this latest text.

Evans makes a compelling case for the need for greater attention to this public health issue. The impact of traffic injuries on society is staggering. Traffic deaths are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality on a worldwide basis, disproportionately affecting youth and residents of less-developed countries. The costs to society for injury treatment, litigation, loss of employment, and collision damage are enormous. Notwithstanding the tragedy of school shootings, terrorist attacks, and airplane crashes, traffic fatalities kill many more individuals in the United States, and have yet to draw the attention that they deserve.

The book is organized in three general sections. The first addresses data sources and the physics of traffic injuries. This includes two excellent chapters, "Vehicular Mass and Size," and "Environment, Roadway, and Vehicle." Evans's background in physics is complemented by straightforward explanations that provide the reader with an entertaining and clear walk through information that could have been dull and hard to understand in another writer's hands.

The second section addresses the individual factors in driving: age, gender, alcohol, and driving performance. The entire chapter devoted to alcohol is indeed justified, given that 16,000 of the 40,000 traffic deaths are alcohol related. The text also

includes an excellent chapter devoted to senior driving issues. Aging affects vision, cognition, and strength, and increases underlying medical problems, all of which negatively impact driving skills. The numbers of crashes per mile driven by seniors aged >80 years exceeds that of teenage boys, rendering elderly men and women the most hazardous drivers on the road. Society must come to terms with what could be called "age-related driving disorders," including restricting driving when appropriate, and providing transportation alternatives.

The final third of the book is devoted to safety issues, from occupant protection (seat belts, airbags) to engineering and legislative measures. The chapter on reducing personal risk is excellent, beginning with the statistic that 98.4% of all drivers will have at least one crash in 48 years of driving. It is a chapter that all drivers should read, regardless of their interest in traffic statistics.

The only disappointment in this book is the scant attention given to cell phones, despite their widespread use throughout the world, and the increasing evidence from both controlled experiments and surveillance research that driving and cell phone use are a risky combination. Evans touches only briefly on the reported hazards of driving while talking on the phone, and he declines to take a stand on the issue.

In summary, this book is well written, unexpectedly humorous in places, and highly instructive. Evans makes an excellent case for giving this topic more attention and for exploring creative and effective public health and legislative interventions.

---

*Reviewed by* Linda L. Hill, MD, MPH, Family & Preventive Medicine, University of California-San Diego, La Jolla, California. E-mail: lhillbaird@aol.com

---

doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2005.06.018