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LETTERS

# It's not only about age

October 1, 2021 @ 2:07am



**LETTERS:** There has been considerable interest in the licensing of older drivers recently. I agree with the inspector-general of police that the matter needs greater scrutiny.

I wish to summarise the issues related to this matter and request the concerned parties to come to a consensus before any major policy decision is taken.

Older drivers are a heterogeneous group. The very definition of "old" is subjective. There are some "young" drivers who have some form of disability and yet continue to drive. There are some who are healthy even at a very old age and can drive safely.

As our life expectancy increases, we can expect more in the older drivers' category. The ability to drive can contribute to improved quality of life in the elderly.

We need to look at the statistics in detail to see what proportions (not "absolute numbers" or "isolated incidents") of drivers of different age groups are involved in road crashes and to what extent in terms of severity.

The world experience suggests that, in general, lower total numbers and proportions of older drivers are involved in crashes.

The reasons include less driving time, distance driven (less exposure on the roads), more compliant to protective equipment (helmets/seat belts) and less risks taken such as speeding, influence of substance/alcohol, etc.

The Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research and the traffic police are in the best position to study these in detail.

Doctors need to consider the driving ability of their patients. In some countries, it is the legal responsibility of the examining doctor to note any inability of the patients to drive.

He should then inform the patients, obtain their driver's licence and inform the transport authorities.

In Malaysia, the Health Ministry, in collaboration with the Malaysian Medical Association and other agencies, has prepared "fitness to drive" guidelines for commercial vehicle drivers. Similar guidelines could be developed or implemented for older drivers.

Finally, as responsible citizens, individuals themselves should take note of their own ability to drive under all circumstances since all of us are prone to temporary tiredness, giddiness, reduced vision and other symptoms.

We should also be proactive in advising our family and friends appropriately if they are unable to drive at any time.

We need to address all these issues to answer the question: older drivers: bane or boon?

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**The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Straits Times**

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