



MAG Fact Sheet

Patient Safety – Distracted Driving

Distracted driving has emerged as a patient safety epidemic.

According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, distracted driving is responsible for about 16 percent of all fatal motor vehicle crashes in the U.S. – which is about 5,000 deaths per year. Meanwhile, a 2014 National Safety Council (NSC) report found that mobile phone use was linked to 26 percent of all car accidents.

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person’s attention away from the primary task of driving, including texting, using a cell phone or smartphone, eating and drinking, grooming, reading, looking at maps, using a navigation system, and adjusting the radio.

In 2016, the Medical Association of Georgia’s (MAG) House of Delegates passed a resolution that calls for MAG to promote legislation that would require drivers who make phone calls while operating a motor vehicle to do so on a hands-free basis.

In 2017, MAG supported a bill that Rep. Betty Price, M.D., introduced that would have prohibited drivers in the state from using hand-held phones while driving – legislation that has passed in 14 other states. (It is also worth noting that Georgia is one of 46 states that have banned drivers from texting while driving.) According to NSC, “In states with hand held device bans, the crash death rates were reduced from 11.8 deaths per 100,000 to 7.3 per 100,000 [which is a 38 percent decline].” While Dr. Price’s bill did not pass in 2017, lawmakers did pass a measure by Rep. John Carson (R-Marietta), H.R. 282, that will result in the formation of a House study committee on distracted driving – and MAG will serve on this committee.

MAG is working with the Medical Association of Atlanta and the MAG Alliance to raise funds to develop a campaign to encourage the 2018 General Assembly to pass legislation requiring drivers who make phone calls using a cell phone to do so on a hands-free basis. Contact Lori Cassity Murphy at lmurphy@mag.org or 678.303.9282 to support this campaign with a donation.

Go to www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html for a summary of U.S. distracted driving laws, and visit www.mag.org/resources/TopDocs to listen to a recording of a 2017 MAG ‘Top Docs Radio’ show on distracted driving.

Other good resources include the Governors Highway Safety Association at www.ghsa.org, the National Safety Council at www.nsc.org/learn/NSC-Initiatives/Pages/distracted-driving.aspx, and the AAA Foundation at www.aaafoundation.org/distracted-driving.

With more than 7,800 members, MAG is the leading voice for the medical profession in Georgia. MAG represents physicians in every specialty and practice setting in the state. Go to www.mag.org for additional information. Contact Derek Norton at dnorton@mag.org or 678.303.9280 with questions. Updated May 25, 2017.