



# Older Driver Safety Summit

Planning a Safe and Mobile Future for Massachusetts

<https://youtu.be/ILOAFtPCztE>

Jean Patel Bushnell

# When the Wheels Fall Off

## UMass Older Driver Safety Summit

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**Beth Israel Deaconess  
Medical Center**



A teaching hospital of  
Harvard Medical School



# Overview

- **Experiential exercise**
- **AFA video: This tells the “story”**
- **Strategies to having “the conversation”**
- **DriveWise 700 patients later**
- **Clinical social work as “bookends”**
- **Future directions and discussion**



# AFA Award Winning Video

**“Your Time To Care; A Roadmap to Alzheimer’s Disease and Driving”**

**YOUR TIME TO CARE...**







# Proactive Measures

# Having the Tough Conversations

- **Have conversations early, before the crisis**
- **Have conversations often**
- **Pick key family member**
- **Add instructions to advance planning**
- **“Bite size” pieces of reality**
- **Involve health professionals**



# Nobody wants to be the “bad guy”

- **Family**
- **Friends**
- **Neighbors**
- **Physicians**

# DRIVEWISE

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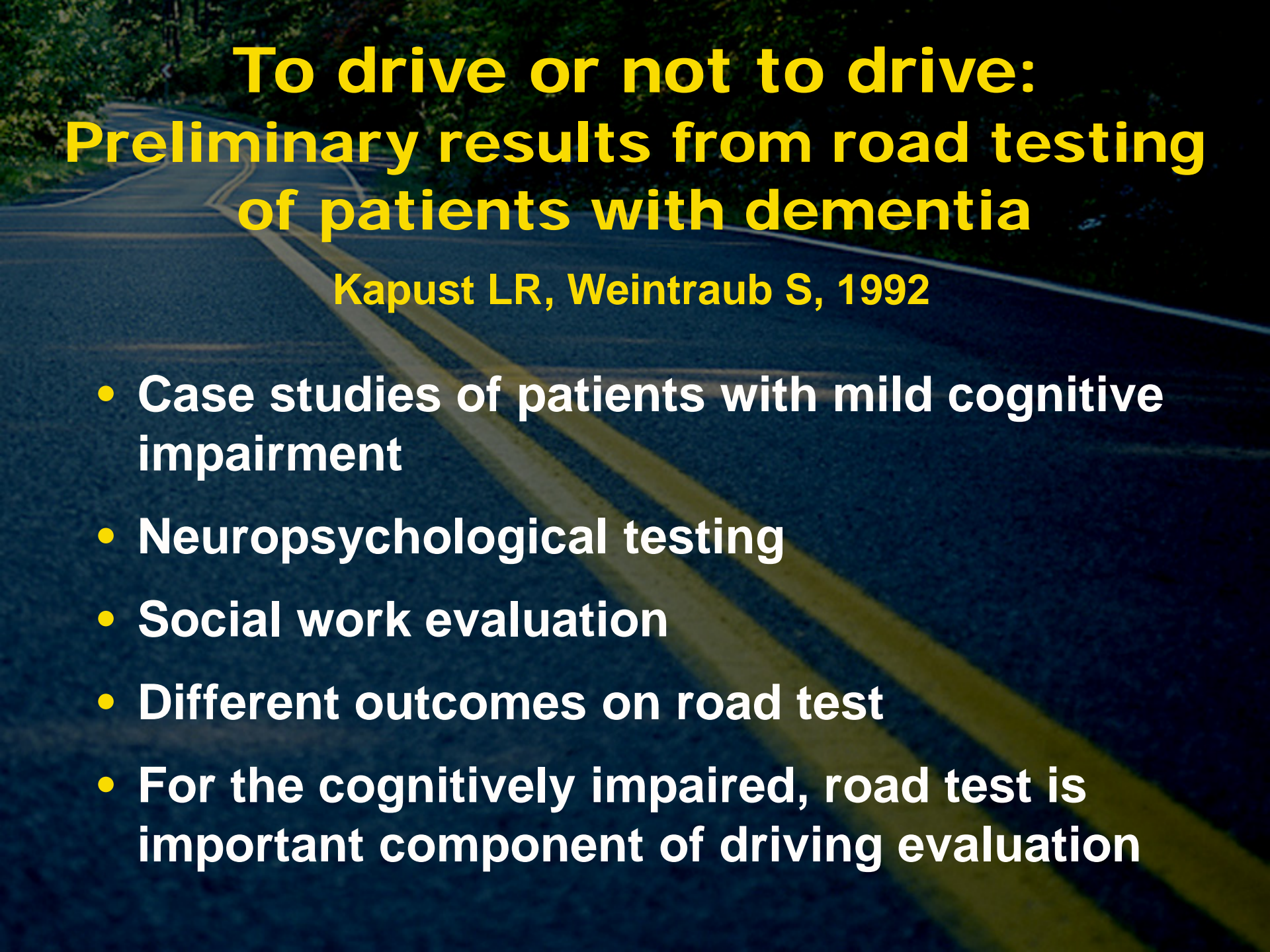


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# To drive or not to drive: Preliminary results from road testing of patients with dementia

**Kapust LR, Weintraub S, 1992**

- **Case studies of patients with mild cognitive impairment**
- **Neuropsychological testing**
- **Social work evaluation**
- **Different outcomes on road test**
- **For the cognitively impaired, road test is important component of driving evaluation**

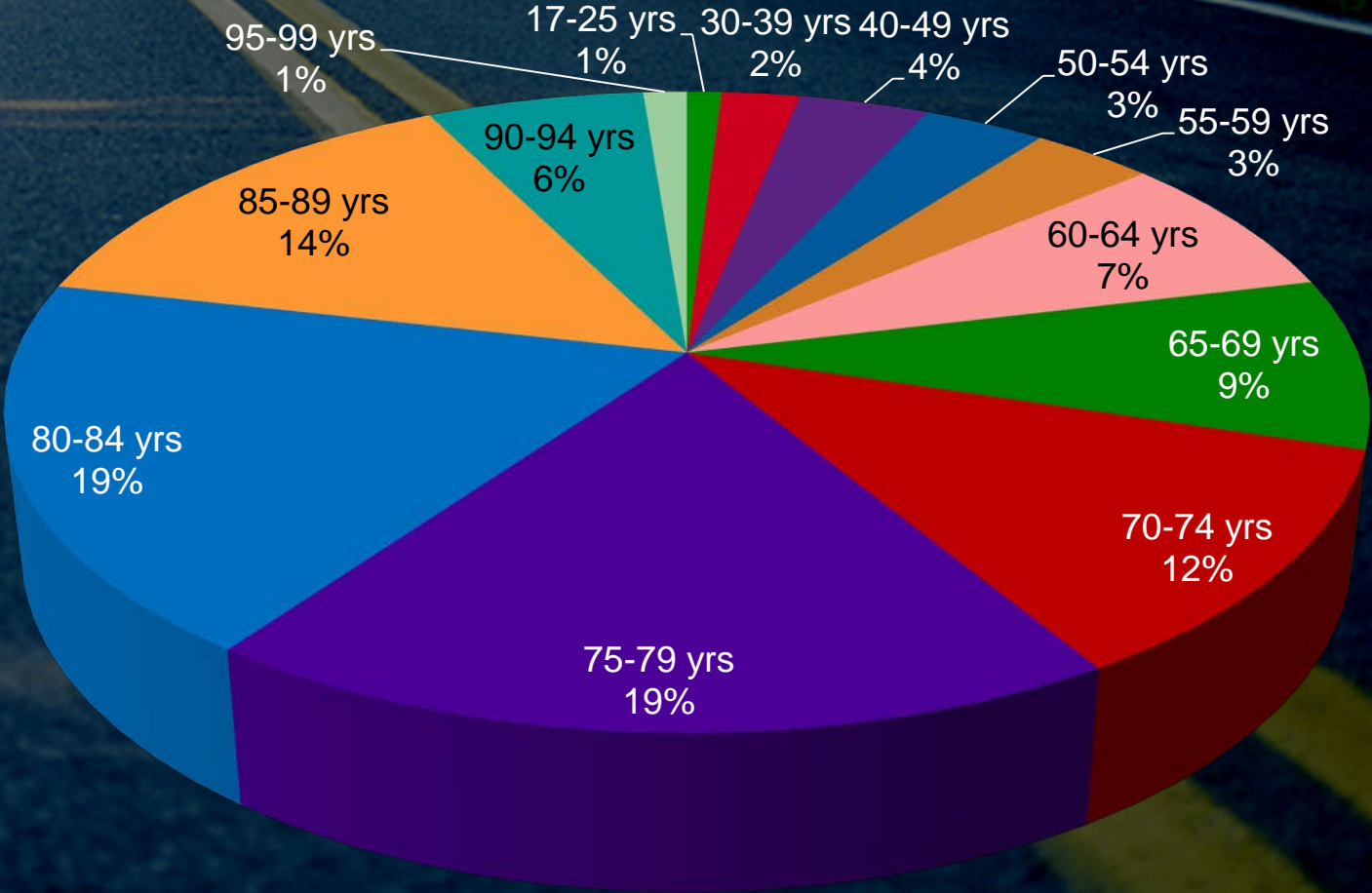


# 2003, CA Farmers' Market Crash

- 86 yo driver “mixes up” brake/gas pedals
- 10 people killed; over 70 people injured
- Driver held criminally negligent
- Jurors felt he lacked remorse



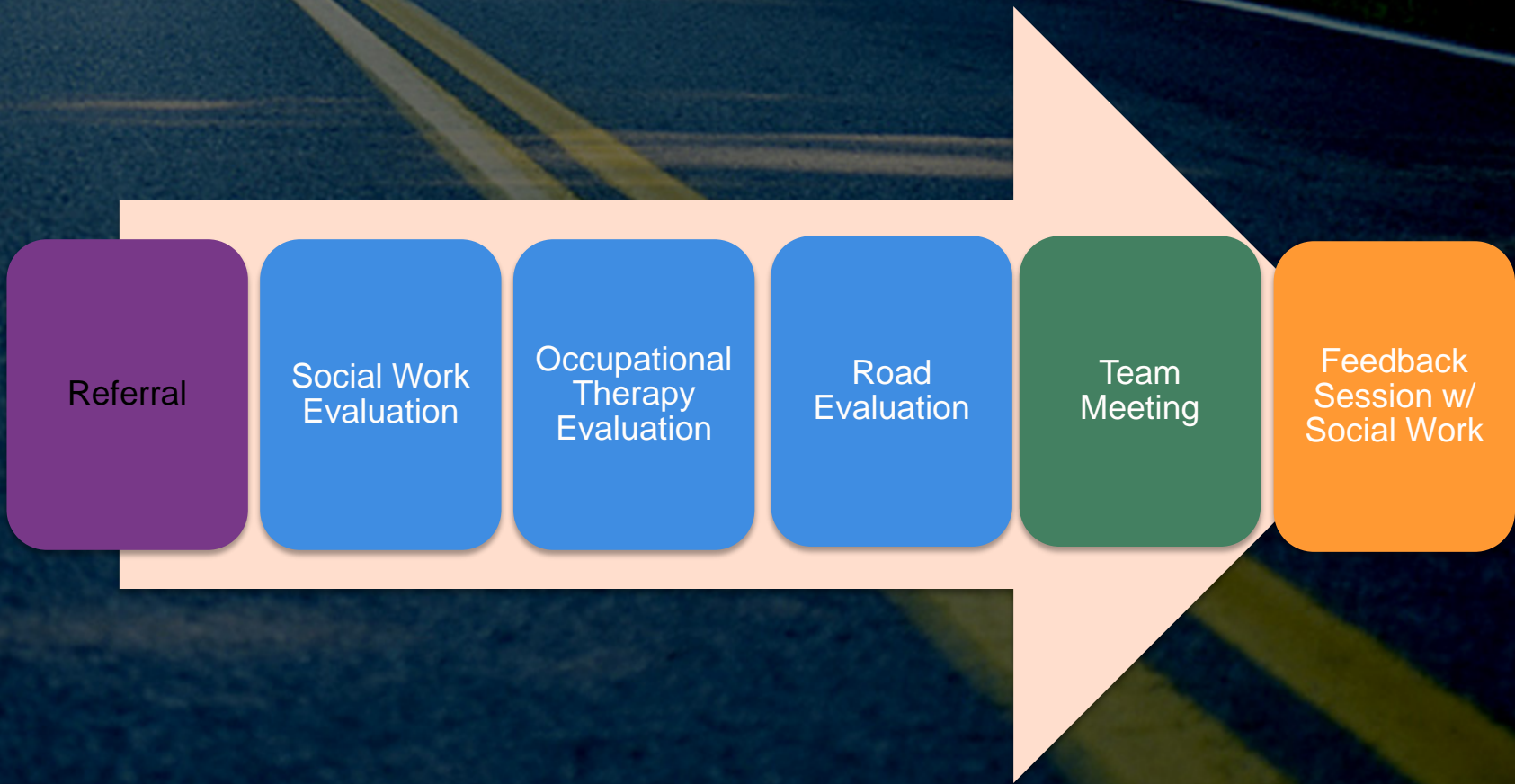
# Demographics Breakdown by Age



# DriveWise is the “Gold Standard”

- **Assesses driving performance on the basis of an on road evaluation**
- **Interdisciplinary team approach in a medical-based setting**
- **Provides supportive interventions for lifestyle changes related to driving safety**
- **Research and education in addition to clinical practice**





# Social Work Evaluation

- **Review of the consent form**
  - “The results of the driving evaluation may be shared with my physician, family member(s) designated, and if necessary with the RMV Medical Affairs office”
- **DW role in reporting to RMV**



# Reporting to the RMV

- **Who can report?**
  - Family members, physicians, law enforcement and other interested third parties (members of the community, private driving schools, physical therapists)
  - No guarantee of anonymity
- **Is there a legal requirement?**
  - There is no legal requirement for a physician or other interested party to report



# Social Work Evaluation

- **Gather history and role of driving in the participant's life**
- **How are they driving? Have they called spouse to find way home? (crashes, near misses, getting lost)**
- **Understand current emotional state, including recent losses and psychosocial stressors**





The voices of our patients

A photograph of a dark, winding asphalt road with double yellow lines, leading into a dense, dark forest. The road curves to the right in the distance. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the road surface appearing dark blue or black. The text is overlaid in the upper left quadrant.

"It was easier to learn I had cancer."





"This is a pot of crock. I am not going to stop driving"

A dark, winding road with double yellow lines leading into a dense forest. The road is paved and has a white dashed line on the right side. The forest is dense with green trees and bushes. The lighting is dim, suggesting dusk or dawn.

"I survived Nazi Germany. Not driving is prison."



# Assessment Tool

- **Taking a driving history: The 4 C's**

# THE 4 C'S

	<b><i>Crash/ Citation (family)</i></b>	<b><i>Concern (family)</i></b>	<b><i>Clinical Status</i></b>	<b><i>Cognition (family)</i></b>
1	<b>No Crashes</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Good health</b>	<b>Intact</b>
2	<b>1+ fender bender</b>	<b>Mild concern</b>	<b>Mild medical</b>	<b>Mild decline</b>
3	<b>Major Citation</b>	<b>Moderate concern</b>	<b>Moderate medical</b>	<b>Moderate decline</b>
4	<b>Crash(es)</b>	<b>Extreme concern</b>	<b>Severe medical</b>	<b>Severe decline</b>



# Team Meeting

- **Who are the members of the team?**
  - **Social Work**
  - **Occupational Therapy**
  - **Certified Driving Instructor**
  - **Neuropsychologist**
- **Sometimes debate, differing opinions, ethical issues. Formulate a recommendation by the end of the meeting.**



# Outcomes from DriveWise

- **Safe to return to driving**
- **Remediation and re-testing**
- **Unsafe to drive**
- **6 month follow up for all patients with progressive illness**
- **45 minute road assessment is only a “snapshot”**



# Breaking Bad News: Techniques

- **Enlist family support**
- **Take time and allow for silences**
- **Focus on history of resilience**
- **Define independence broadly**
- **Focus on actual driving errors**
- **Discuss safety for self and others**
- **Medicalize the problem / "gift" the car**
- **Monitor for mood changes**

# Warning Signs for Unsafe Driving

- **Getting lost**
- **Can't distinguish gas/brake**
- **Inability to make quick decisions**
- **Running on curbs**
- **Can't recognize road signs**
- **Problems with left turns**
- **Problems merging**



# Future Directions

- **Bigger signs**
- **Lighted signs**
- **Wider striping**
- **Broader use of “silver alert”**

# Wellbeing Habilitation

- **Regular checkups**
- **Current eye exams**
- **Self monitor driving**
- **Medication compliance**
- **Ask others for input on driving**



# Car habilitation

- **Good car maintenance**
- **Use of seatbelts**
- **Avoid distractions**
- **When buying new cars consider pros/cons of new technology**

# What our patients have taught us

- **The value of resilience**
- **There is no “slam dunk”**
- **Remediation can make a difference**
- **Subjectivity is inevitable**



## Take Home Message

- **Most of us will outlive our driving fitness by 7-10 years**
- **How will you plan for this in your life?**









It Is Time!

How do you know when it is time to  
"hang up the car keys"?

I say when your dog has this look on his  
face!

A picture is worth a thousand words!