Warnings cut road trauma, but at a cost

To the Editor: A news article in the 15 October issue of the Journal highlighted the contentious issue of doctors warning older patients that their driving skills may be impaired and the cost of such medical warnings[1] — matters that had been raised in the *New England Journal of Medicine*[2] and the *BMJ*.[3]

The news article noted that a viewpoint in the *BMJ* had claimed that "evidence does not support the medical screening of older drivers", and added that, contrary to popular belief, "older drivers had an enviable crash record". Alas, accompanying the news item is a photograph of a man of indeterminate age sitting behind the steering wheel of a motor vehicle with his elbow resting outside the driver's door. This is not only a criminal offence subject to a monetary fine (see, for example, the Transport Operations [Road Use Management — Road Rules] Regulation 2009 [Qld]) but constitutes contributory negligence at common law. Were this driver involved in a collision in which his arm was injured, his claim for damages would be reduced accordingly even if the *collision* was solely due to the negligence of the other driver.

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Competing interests: I am an 88-year-old driver.

doi: 10.5694/mja12.11574

1 Overs M. Warnings cut road trauma, but at a cost [news]. *Med J Aust* 2012; 197: 435.
2 Redelmeier DA, Yarnell CJ, Thiruchelvam D, Tibshirani RJ. Physicians' warnings for unfit drivers and the risk of trauma from road crashes. *N Engl J Med* 2012; 367: 1228-1236.
3 O'Neill D. Medical screening of older drivers is not evidence based. *BMJ* 2012; 345: e6371. ❑