

## Story Idea: *Driving Laws and People with Epilepsy*

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Road safety is an increasing concern in this country, whether it be expressed as worry about older drivers, about teens who drive while using cell phones, or about people who have epilepsy and drive (or have a seizure *while* driving). You'll find them all in recent headlines, including ones about fatal accidents, and your readers will likely wonder what is being done to protect them and their children. Your readers have a right to know that seizures while driving are serious and potentially preventable, but do not pose a major public safety risk. Despite this, drivers with epilepsy have to meet specific licensing requirements in order to drive. Many states require physician's reporting of their patient's condition to regulatory authorities prior to patient's being licensed to drive, while other states rely on voluntary self-reporting.

### Story Resources

- [Driving fatalities vs other causes of death in patients with epilepsy, Soham G. Sheth, MBBS MPH, Gregory Krauss, MD, Allan Krumholz, MD and Guohua Li, MD PhD, Neurology.2004; 63: 1002-1007.](#)
- **News articles:** [Explosion Guts Rockville Apartments](#); [Investigators: SUV in 9-vehicle, triple fatal traveling 98 mph](#); [Driver in two fatal crashes has long list of violations.](#)
- **The Epilepsy Index**, an educational Web resource for general epilepsy information, [www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm).

### Suggested Interview Questions

- How great are the risks associated with drivers who have epilepsy?
- What are your local laws for driving with epilepsy?
- How are seizure disorder/epilepsy-related laws affecting doctor/patient confidentiality?
- Should doctors be held liable for accidents caused by physician-approved drivers with epilepsy?
- Should physicians be encouraged to report drivers with epilepsy?

### Fast Facts

- On average, 44,000 traffic deaths occur each year. According to a report by Soham G. Seth, MD (*Internal Medicine News*):
  - 13,436 are alcohol-related
  - 1,257 are due to cardiac disease and hypertension
  - 89 are due to epilepsy

- More than 3 million Americans have epilepsy, a neurological condition that causes brief electrical disturbances in the brain which causes seizures. With proper antiepileptic medications, most people with epilepsy can lead normal lives full of everyday experiences, such as driving.
- One in 56 adults has epilepsy; Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

### **Interview Opportunities**

- Eric Hargis, president and chief executive officer, the Epilepsy Foundation.
- Physician specialist.
- Person with epilepsy who is affected by the driving laws.

### **About the Epilepsy Foundation**

The Epilepsy Foundation, a national nonprofit with affiliated organizations throughout the United States, has led the fight against epilepsy since 1968. The Epilepsy Foundation will ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences and will prevent, control and cure epilepsy through services, education, advocacy and research. For additional information, please visit [www.epilepsyfoundation.org](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org).