

Latest Research November 2009

RRISK PROGRAM

REDUCES THE RISK OF YOUNG DRIVER CAR CRASHES BY 44%

New research, published in *Pediatrics*, November, 2009 investigating the benefits of young driver education has shown that young drivers who attended the RRISK program had a 44% reduced risk of a car crashes. The research compared the impact of 2 school based programs on traffic infringements and crashes for young drivers. RRISK, described as a 'resilience building' program by the researchers, is the first and only school based educational program to have resulted in a reduction in road crashes. Those who attended the other 'driver focused' program had no reduction in crashes.

RRISK builds resilience because the focus is much broader than other road safety programs. It includes a one-day seminar supplemented with peer training workshops and other activities such as newsletters for parents and community meetings. It moves beyond simply learning about road risks, to providing students with strategies and skills to avoid or manage a range of risky situations such as pressure from peers around alcohol and drug use, planning a safe return from parties, encouraging them to make informed decisions about road safety and looking after friends. These new findings are part of Australia's largest study of young drivers, the DRIVE study, which involved over 20,000 Provisional (P plate) drivers.

Motor vehicle crashes are the single leading cause of death of youth in Australia, but to date, there is little evidence that education programs reduce road crashes. Researchers from The George Institute of International Health assessed the impact of the RRISK program on risk of crash in subsequent years and concluded that this best practice program builds resilience which the key to prevention programs aimed at reducing adolescent risk taking.

These results are part of a series of analyses from the DRIVE study, which is the largest survey of young drivers ever undertaken and was funded by Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council, NRMA Motoring and Services, and NRMA-ACT Road Safety trust and the Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW. The DRIVE study recruited over 20,822 young drivers holding red P-plates in NSW aged 17-24 years and examined their crashes reported to police. The overall aim of the study is to investigate the risk factors in motor vehicle-related crashes and injuries among young drivers and to find ways to improve the safety of young drivers and help make roads safer for all users. This particular analysis investigated the benefits of young driver education programs.

The George Institute is a world renowned health and medical research institute, focused on the prevention and management of chronic disease and injury. The George is affiliated with the University of Sydney and conducts high-impact research across a broad health landscape and is a respected voice among global policy makers. The George has conducted major global applied research projects and innovative community-based programs from bases in Australia, China and India. In 2009, the Institute celebrates a decade of discovery, innovation and impact. www.thegeorgeinstitute.org

The Young Driver Factbase www.youngdriverfactbase.com is an online resource, containing up-to-date information on young driver safety and provides recommendations based on the best available research evidence. Visit www.youngdriverfactbase.com to see an overview of all the issues facing young drivers

and the latest evidence investigating these factors such as high powered vehicles, driver distraction and restrictions.