

March 09 2014 | Last updated

gulfnews.com

News | UAE



 www.gold.ae
+971 4 4473635

ADHD blamed for bad driving in the UAE

loading
Close [x]

Psychologists suggest high road crash rate could be down to disorder going untreated

By Suchitra Bajpai Chaudhary, Senior Reporter
Published: 21:00 March 8, 2014

GULF NEWS



Image Credit: Gulf News Archives

Dubai: Drivers hit with ADHD could be the reason behind many accidents on the roads, psychologists have said.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is on the rise in adults in the UAE and authorities are studying whether it might be linked to the spike in traffic

accidents.

The UAE, the second largest Arab economy and one of the wealthiest nations, has one of the world's highest traffic accident rates relative to its population.

Statistics reveal that road accidents have killed more than 5,514 people in the UAE over the past six years, an average of more than two every day, with drivers ratcheting up 21 million traffic fines for traffic violations.

Many of these could be averted by addressing adult ADHD which has been found to be very common in the UAE and needs to be explored, according to a study conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2010.

According to the study, road traffic injuries (RTI) were identified as a major cause for concern because of their high prevalence in the UAE.

The study, part of the National Priority Health Research workshop conducted by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation (WHO), said that the police had done extensive research on RTI and conceded that adult ADHD was on the rise in the UAE.

Following that, health departments needed to provide additional information on the psychological profiles/knowledge attitudes and practices of drivers, pre/post intervention studies, and impact studies.

Dr Mohammad Ramadan, clinical psychologist with Dubai Police, agreed that there was a high incidence of ADHD in children and it was likely that it was being carried into adulthood.

"In the UAE we have yet to understand the dynamics of this disorder," Dr Ramadan said.

"Lack of knowledge of its incidence and the method of treatment means it often goes undetected in children.

"It is likely that this is behind the high rate of traffic accidents in the UAE as we often see a lot of aggressive behaviour on the roads.

"People suffering from personality disorders such as ADHD have a need to win and also to hurt other people.

"Effective therapy can help such patients. Even the use of electronic devices can help. For instance you see some children playing with their hand-held devices such as PlayStations for hours on end.

"A simulation of the same kind of focus that they require for playing such games is required to keep their attention. Gradually this kind of attention can be adapted to other spheres of life."

Distraction

Ahmad Hashim Behroozian, CEO of the RTA Licensing Agency, could not comment on the incidence of ADHD but felt that personality disorders were often a factor behind people failing their driving tests.

"We have come across people suffering from certain kinds of phobias related to roads and driving," Behroozian said.

"We have seen that drivers repeatedly fail road tests because of fear, though they drive well during the internal assessments.

"We haven't come across any ADHD cases and we are not aware of the issue if there is one.

"We need to work with specialists to identify the cases and how to tackle them. We have started medical screening with heavy vehicle drivers and the criteria is based on the UK model which is very stringent."

According to Dr Jutta Marquardt, a neurologist at the German Neuroscience Centre at Dubai Healthcare City and an ADHD expert, although the incidence of ADHD in children in the UAE is 12.5 per cent and remains consistent with worldwide figures, left untreated it continues into adulthood and causes major behavioural problems, including loss of focus and distraction that could lead to traffic accidents while driving.

“Common manifestations of bad driving due to ADHD could be traffic violations such as jumping red lights or even having difficulty focusing on the road for a long time,” she said.

“Many of the ADHD patients who come to us are not even aware that they may be suffering from ADHD.

"They come to us with other complaints such as frequent headaches and for treatment of stress.

"However, simple tests can diagnose ADHD. A combination of drugs and behavioural therapy have helped these patients resolve many of the ADHD symptoms.

"Most of the patients have to be on life-long treatment but once they go through behavioural therapy they are able to wean themselves off the medication."

— *With inputs from Shafaat Shahbandari, Staff Reporter*

Fact Box

ADHD is a serious disorder with consequences caused by a neurobiological dysfunction in the brain, said Dr Jutta Marquardt, a neurologist at the German Neuroscience Centre at Dubai Healthcare City

Patients are only partially able to focus their attention on one thing. They are not able to distinguish between

important and unimportant information. A genetic predisposition is supposed because of high family occurrence but alcohol, nicotine, liquorice and a lack of oxygen at birth may also increase the risk of ADHD as well as environmental factors.

Behavioural therapy can help ADHD patients. “In a study conducted in Sweden on adults with ADHD, a control group was put through a regimen of behavioural exercises and that resulted in a marked improvement in their focus and their behaviour while driving,” she added.

Symptoms

1. Inability to follow long conversations
2. Difficulty in completing tasks
3. Frequently losing objects (such as car keys, purse)
4. Mood swings alternating between normal and depressed and high excitation
5. Frequent irritability and boredom
6. Disorganised behaviour such as inadequately planned activity
7. A chaotic lifestyle where a person flits from one task to another without completing either one.
8. Such people change jobs frequently and get into financial problems
9. Dissatisfaction in relationships, resulting in unstable friendships and divorce.
10. Patients have a problem educating their children