

## **A new law to make it easier for police to catch and convict drug drivers took effect this year in England and Wales.**

Rachel Gardner our Parkinson's Nurse has advised that this information was received by the Betjeman Centre at GWH earlier in the year and that advice is given when patients are started on these medications. Rachel has requested that I would feed it through our Branch and that the more people who hear this message the better.

*Dave Logan (Chair Parkinson's UK – Swindon & District Branch) - 30 November 2015*

### **New Law**

On 2 March 2015 8 generally prescription and 8 illicit drugs were added into new regulations that came into force in England and Wales. Regulations on amphetamine came into force on 14 April 2015.

### **Drug Testing**

Motorists who get behind the wheel after taking illegal drugs face a criminal record, loss of their licence for at least a year and a fine of up to £5000. The new legislation makes it illegal to drive with certain drugs in the body above specified levels, including 8 illegal drugs and 8 prescription drugs. However, people using prescription drugs within recommended amounts will not be penalised.

Police forces will have access to new screening equipment to test suspected drug drivers. Officers can screen drivers for cannabis and cocaine at the roadside. They will be able to test for these and other drugs including ecstasy, LSD, ketamine and heroin at a police station, even if a driver passes the roadside check. New devices that can test for a greater number of drugs at the roadside will be developed in the future.

This new law, coupled with the testing kits, will make it quicker to identify those driving under the influence of drugs and help the prosecution of drug drivers. It remains an offence to drive when impaired by any drug, including medical drugs.

The government's message is clear - if you take drugs and drive, you are endangering yourself and others and you risk losing your licence and a conviction.

The law covers use of 8 drugs commonly associated with medicinal use, that are sometimes abused, that have been set at higher limits based on the available evidence of the road safety risk and to reflect their use as medicines. These are:

Morphine used to treat pain – opiate/opioid based medication will metabolise (chemically change) into morphine and show in a blood result

1. Diazepam
2. Clonazepam
3. Flunitrazepam
4. Lorazepam
5. Oxazepam

6. Temazepam used to treat anxiety or inability to sleep
7. Methadone used to treat drug addiction
8. Amphetamine used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) **and Parkinson's disease**

### **Illegal' drugs ('accidental exposure' – zero tolerance approach)**

#### **Threshold limit in blood**

- Benzoylcegonine 50µg/L
- Cocaine 10µg/L
- Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (cannabis) 2µg/L
- Ketamine 20µg/L
- Lysergic acid diethylamide 1µg/L
- Methylamphetamine 10µg/L
- MDMA 10µg/L
- 6-monoacetylmorphine (heroin) 5µg/L

### **'Medicinal' drugs (risk based approach)**

#### **Threshold limit in blood**

- Amphetamine 250µg/L  
*used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) **and Parkinson's disease***
- Clonazepam 50µg/L
- Diazepam 550µg/L
- Flunitrazepam 300µg/L
- Lorazepam 100µg/L
- Methadone 500µg/L
- Morphine 80µg/L
- Oxazepam 300µg/L
- Temazepam 1,000µg/L

Drugs can affect driving in numerous ways, ranging from slower reaction times, erratic and aggressive behaviour, an inability to concentrate properly, nausea, hallucinations, panic attacks, paranoia, tremors (or 'the shakes') to dizziness and fatigue. Getting behind the wheel in such a condition is dangerous for the driver, their passengers and other road users.

Some medicines that are sometimes abused are also included in the new law. However, if you are taking medicines as directed and your driving is not impaired, then you are not breaking the law. To find out more, ask your doctor or a member of the pharmacy team.