The Role of the Policeman and of the Medical Doctor in the Evaluation of Impairment in Drivers

C. Mercier-Guyon, M. Mallaret, J.B. Driencourt, T. Roupioz

Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches en Médecine du Trafic

Résumé:
Background/Introduction: the evaluation of impairment in drivers actually faces two problems in Europe and in other countries: The respective role of the policeman and of the medical doctors are difficult to define, regarding to ethical aspects by example, it would not be allowed, in many European countries, for a policeman, to ask questions about medical problems or to proceed to medical acts like the blood pressure checking included in the US DRE system.

On an other hand, a medical doctor not professionally involved in driving related problems should face ethical difficulties to clearly answer to the questions of the police; furthermore, the actual test batteries used by policemen (Field sobriety test, DRE) are less well adapted to the stimulant drugs like amphetamines, or to some new synthetic drugs those drugs will probably need the inclusion of some new tests which are mainly based on more medical criteria and less on behavioral criteria to face the problem of the combination of drugs, of the stimulants drugs and of the new synthetic drugs, it will be necessary to clarify the relative role of the field policemen (evaluation of the behavior, establishment of a reasonable suspicion of impairment) of the expert policeman (DRE), of the medical practitioner required by the police (emergency units, countryside), and of especially trained practitioners (experts in forensic medicine or in driving fitness).

The evolution, in Europe, with the harmonisation of national procedures will also be an opportunity to adapt those procedures and to take into account the evolution of the drugs used and of the use of drugs.

This evolution happens in the same time as a greater interest in most of the member states, for drug related accidents.

Several large experimentations (ROSITA Project, Council of Europe) are also an opportunity to implement modern procedures in this field.

The creation of a new working group in the ICADTS, devoted to the interest of new approaches and of new tests will clearly demonstrates the role of ICADTS as a leader in the field of the knowledge about the effects of psychotropic substances in drivers and in the improvement of traffic safety.