

Defensive Driving and Iran's "No to Road Accidents" Campaign: The Pivotal Role of Occupational Health and Safety Professionals in Reducing Fatalities

Dear Editor

Road traffic accidents (RTAs) are a leading cause of mortality globally and in Iran. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 1.3 million lives are lost annually due to RTAs, with Iran ranking among high-risk nations at a rate of 22.5 fatalities per 100,000 population.¹⁻³ In response, the Iranian Ministry of Health launched the "No to Road Accidents" campaign, aiming to reduce road fatalities by 30%, by 2030. The campaign promotes a cultural shift by emphasizing the importance of safe driving. This letter highlights the critical role of defensive driving strategies and occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals in achieving the campaign's goals.

1. The "No to Road Accidents" Campaign: Translating Awareness into Action

The campaign prioritizes public education on risk factors, such as speeding, seatbelt noncompliance, and driver fatigue. This focus aligned with the WHO's Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021–2030).² However, global evidence underscores the necessity of integrating defensive driving principles and collaboration with cross-sectoral stakeholders, particularly OHS professionals, to ensure sustained success.

2. Defensive Driving: A Science-Based Intervention

Defensive driving, a proactive approach emphasizing hazard anticipation and error mitigation, has demonstrated significant reductions in human-error-related collisions. Studies reported up to a 40% reduction in accident rates following evidence-based training. Integrating strategies, such as safe distance maintenance, blind-spot monitoring, and speed adaptation into the campaign could enhance its impact.⁴ It is recommended that regular defensive driving programs be made mandatory for Iran's professional drivers (e.g., truck and bus operators), who are disproportionately involved in RTAs.³

3. Occupational Health and Safety Professionals: Catalysts for Change

OHS experts possess the essential competencies in risk assessment, safety systems design, and workforce training to support road accident and fatality reduction. Their involvement in commercial transport sectors could reduce occupational injury costs by up to 50%.^{2,5}

Across the campaign, OHS professionals' contributions could include:

- Evidence-based training: Developing cognitive-behavioral programs for industrial and public transport drivers.
- Occupational risk analysis: Identifying stressors (e.g., prolonged shifts) linked to driver's error.
- Policy collaboration: Advocating for improved vehicle safety standards and enforcement of mandatory rest laws.

The "No to Road Accidents" campaign represents a pivotal opportunity to address Iran's RTA crisis. To maximize its efficacy, we propose:

1. Integrating defensive driving principles into public awareness campaigns and licensing curricula.
2. Utilizing OHS expertise to develop targeted workplace driver training programs, particularly for high-risk industries (e.g., transport sector).
3. Enhancing collaboration between the Ministries of Health and Roads, alongside OHS professionals from public and private sectors.

Future research should evaluate the quantitative impact of OHS-led interventions on RTA reduction throughout the campaign's implementation.

Authors' Contribution

R.C and V.G: Conception and design; acquisition, and interpretation of data for the work, drafting and revising. Both authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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