

Nigeria Physiotherapy Network

[About Us](#) > [PhysioNews and Other News](#) > **Akinwuntan appointed to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration expert panel on strokes and commercial truck driving**

[Dr. Abiodun Akinwuntan](#), an assistant professor of physical therapy in the Medical College of Georgia School of Allied Health Sciences, has been appointed to a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration expert panel on strokes and commercial truck driving.

The three-member panel will review recent research and recommend revisions to the medical standards and guidelines used to determine whether drivers are fit to operate a commercial motor vehicle, such as an 18-wheeler, after suffering a stroke.

Current standards, created in 1988, affect up to 11 million truck drivers nationwide, according to the administration, which is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Several problems face truck drivers who have had a stroke, says Dr. Akinwuntan, director of MCG's Driving Simulation Lab.

"Truck drivers live stressful lives," he says. "They're hardly ever at home and many have poor nutrition, lack of sleep and little time for exercise. Coupled with the fact that they may have already had a stroke and still expose themselves to these problems, the chances they could have a second stroke are very high."

Common problems associated with a stroke, such as decreased peripheral vision and cognitive deficit, pose additional risks for commercial truck drivers.

"When you add this to the already decreased peripheral view associated with 18-wheelers, you can see how dangerous someone who has had a stroke could be to every person on the road and to himself," says Dr. Akinwuntan.

Decreased cognitive function can hamper the ability to make decisions, such as whether to stop or speed through a yellow traffic light.

"When you add all of that together, should stroke survivors be driving commercial trucks? Yes and no," Dr. Akinwuntan says. "They should be allowed to drive, but should have a stricter medical screening protocol compared to a driver who has never had a stroke."

Dr. Akinwuntan came to MCG in 2005 from the University of East London. He researches driving simulation for neurologically impaired patients.

He is a member of the Nigerian Society of Physiotherapy, the Medical Rehabilitation Therapists Board of Nigeria, the Health Professions Council of the United Kingdom and the Transportation Research Board's Committee on Simulation and Measurement of Vehicle and Operator Performance.

He is a manuscript reviewer for Stroke, Neuroscience, European Journal of Neurology, Neurorehabilitation and Neural Repair and the Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Dr. Akinwuntan joined MCG in 2005. He earned his bachelor's degree in physiotherapy at the University of Lagos in Nigeria and his master's and doctoral degrees in neuromotor rehabilitation at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium. He completed post-doctoral training in education at the University of East London. He is a member of the Nigeria Society of Physiotherapy, the Medical Rehabilitation Therapists Board of Nigeria and the Health Professions Council of the United Kingdom.

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