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**Title: Saving lives on our roads: Frequent Health Checks for Drivers may offer a solution.**

In recent times, Ghana has been riddled with news of many gory road fatalities which have rendered families rid of beloved relatives and friends. A [recent data from the Motor Traffic and Transport Department \(MTTD\)](#) of the Ghana Police Service as reported by graphic online indicated that in 2019 alone, 2,284 fatalities occurred due to road accidents in Ghana, with the Greater Accra Region leading the figures with 449 deaths followed by Ashanti and the Eastern region respectively. These alarming figures have not been very different from preceding years and 2020 has had its own share of the numbers, judging from recent news broadcasts across the nation. Just recently, some [young footballers met their untimely death](#) when the bus they were travelling on crashed into a river.

Very often, these road carnages have been linked to lack of concentration of drivers, the bad nature of our roads, failure of drivers to adhere to road signs and technical problems with the vehicles involved. To a large extent, these are important causes worthy of attention but what if these fatalities had other roots? What if the drivers had some medical conditions that could render them incapable of handling such vehicles? This blog discusses an overlooked contributing factor to road traffic accidents, the state of health of vehicle handlers.

Like everyone else, drivers suffer various medical conditions including diabetes mellitus, hypertension, epilepsy and eye problems; just to mention a few. Many commercial drivers engage in some unhealthy behaviors due to the nature of their profession. They seldom have health checks due to busy schedules and indulge in unhealthy eating habits, substance abuse and frequent intake of unprescribed over-the-counter medications. Over a long period of time, these habits expose them to developing certain lifestyle related health conditions. Unfortunately, these health conditions do not manifest their signs and symptoms in time, so the victim lives a normal life until the unforeseen happens. For instance, one classical manifestation of diabetes mellitus is the fact that the sufferer's blood glucose may drop suddenly and get them to become weak and drowsy. Drivers in this acute situation may lose control of the vehicle and the resulting effect is obvious. A sudden cardiac arrest which has a higher likelihood of occurring in hypertensive patients and those with other heart conditions, may render drivers in similar situations helpless during their trip. The situation wouldn't be any different if a driver with epilepsy experiences a seizure in the process of driving. Glaucoma, cataract, long and shortsightedness are various eye conditions that could interfere with the normal vision of the driver especially when the natural weather is already unfavorable for vision.

Road carnages could be prevented if the right vehicular precautions and road safety regulations are adhered to but it is time to consider a different approach to solving this menace in Ghana. There is the need to broadened the focus, to ensure that drivers are always in good health to handle vehicles travelling on long routes. Some useful suggestions:

- Companies should ensure their drivers undergo compulsory routine health checks including eye tests at

least six months apart.

- The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) should ensure they clamp down on drivers who acquire their licenses illegally, thus do not undergo the compulsory eye test necessary for the issuance of the drivers license.
- The Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) and the other transport organizations should encourage their members to frequently undergo medical examination
- Well-meaning health NGOs should be involved in organizing frequent health screening programs purposely for commercial drivers.
- Individual vehicle owners and drivers (private and commercial) must as well take active responsibility for their own health and ensure good eating habits, create time for rest and ensure they patronize appropriate health facilities for their health needs.

There is more to road accidents than inattention of drivers and bad roads. If we broaden our perspective, these guidelines would go a large extent to ensure safety of passengers and other road users and inadvertently reduce the rate of fatalities on our roads.