Learning Objectives
• Discuss standards for hearing for drivers
• Discuss hearing history questions
• Cover the physical examination
• Detail how to perform hearing testing for drivers
• Discuss specific conditions related to the ears that may cause impairment
• Review certification and documentation

Summary of Regulation
• Physically Qualified if:
  – Able to perceive a forced whisper in better ear at not less than five feet with or without use of hearing aid
  – OR does not have average hearing loss in better ear of more than 40 db with or without hearing aid at 500, 1000, 2000 Hz

Summary of Regulation
• Driver meets hearing qualification requirements if hearing passes one test in one ear.
  • NOTES:
  • Driver who must use a hearing aid to qualify must also use a hearing aid while operating a CMV.
  • There is no Federal exemption program for loss of hearing that does not meet qualification requirements.

Hearing and Driving
• Hearing is important to driving
• It is also important to other job functions
• Balance is also important

Medical Examiner Responsibilities:
• Recall hearing examination requirements are cited in 49 CFR 391.43 (f) Ears.
• Identify ear diseases & symptoms that can interfere with safe operation of a CMV.
• Describe how to correctly administer the forced whisper test.
• Demonstrate correctly calculating audiometric test results to determine average hearing loss.
• Explain why the driver who fails one hearing test in both ears must be given the other hearing test.
Health History Questions

• History of:
  – Ear disorders?
  – Loss of hearing?
  – Loss of balance?

• Also ask
  – Symptoms related to or caused by ear disease?
  – Any use of otic preparations?

Physical Examination

• Examine for:
  – Scarring of the tympanic membranes
  – Occlusion of the external ear canal
  – Perforated ear drums

• Make sure you note and discuss any abnormal findings including impact upon driving and certification
• Remember: Hearing loss may be a symptom of another disease process

Hearing Testing

• Whisper Test Environment
  • Many variables can impact validity of the test, such as estimating instead of measuring distances, performing test in a room with poor acoustics or subject to outside noise or other distractions. CME should attempt to control as many of variables as possible, so the test is given as consistently as possible.

• Audiometry
  – Must be done to ANSI Standard Z24.5-1951
  – May be tested with or without hearing aids but if hearing aid is to be worn during testing audiologist or hearing aid center should perform test using appropriate audiometric equipment.

FMCSA Guidelines

• Guidance recommends 2-month, symptom-free waiting period for diagnoses of:
  – Acute and chronic peripheral vestibulopathy
  – Benign positional vertigo
• Guidance recommends not to certify with diagnoses of:
  – Uncontrolled vertigo
  – Meniere’s Disease
  – Labyrinthine Fistula
  – Nonfunctioning Fistula

• May be reviewed on FMCSA website

Additional Evaluation/Ancillary Tests

• Recommended for inconclusive findings

• Referral to ENT or Audiologist before making decision regarding certification
Documentation/Certification
• If hearing aid is required document “wearing hearing aid” checkboxes
• Certification period may be for two years
• Advise driver to carry spare power source for hearing aid

Hearing Scenarios
• Medical Examination Report Form—Mr. Reggie Chin
  • Mr. Chin—Recertification Examination
  • Sex: Male | Age: 54 | Height: 74” | Weight: 240 lbs.
  • Health History
    • Yes response(s): Loss of hearing.
    • Medication(s): None
  • Health History Comments:
    • CMV driver who presents for re-certification, has history of frequent ear infections in childhood, had multiple tympanic membrane ruptures & infections in elementary school and into middle-school years. He has —always been hard of hearing in left ear.

Hearing Scenarios
• Vision:
  • Uncorrected Acuity: Rt. Eye: 20/30 Lt. Eye: 20/30 Both: 20/30
  • Horizontal Field of Vision: Rt. Eye: 90° Lt. Eye: 90°
  • Meets standard only when wearing: Corrective lenses? No
  • Color: Can distinguish red, green, and amber colors? Yes
  • Monocular Vision? No

Hearing Scenarios
• Hearing:
  • Hearing aid used for test? No
  • Hearing aid required to meet standard? No
  • Whisper test: Rt. Ear: 5 Feet Lt. Ear: 3 Feet
  • Audiometric test hearing loss average: Rt. Ear: N/A, Lt. Ear: N/A

Hearing Scenarios
• Blood Pressure/Pulse:
  • BP-134/80, P-86 & Regular

Hearing Scenarios
• Urinalysis:
  • SG GR.: 1.020 | Protein: Neg: | Blood: Neg | Glucose: Neg

Hearing Scenarios
• Physical Examination Comments:
  • Forced whisper test results – Right ear passed; left ear failed. Left tympanic membrane is scarred & misshapen.
  • Noted post-nasal drainage.
  • The rest of the physical examination was unremarkable.

Hearing Scenarios
• What is the certification decision in this scenario?
  • Certify Mr. Chin for 2 years. To meet certification standards, the driver only needs to pass one test in one ear. Mr. Chin passed the forced whisper test with his right ear. There were no other medical findings that would require more frequent monitoring.
  • Whisper Test Results

Hearing Scenarios
• Advise Driver
  • Should CME advise Mr. Chin to see a specialist because of possible future hearing problems?
  • No, left ear hearing loss has been stable for years. However, Mr. Chin may be at risk for noise-induced hearing loss. Suggesting an inquiry into precautions to take to reduce risk of better-ear hearing loss may be appropriate.
Questions?

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