

Teens learn the dangers of drunk driving

The MGH Trauma Division recently put some young drivers to the test as they participated in a state-of-the-art, drunk-driving simulator designed to demonstrate the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol. The educational event was part of the national "Save a Life Tour" held May 9 and 10 at the Northshore Mall in Peabody, Mass.



Invitations to the program were sent to local public and private high schools, and approximately 160 teens experienced the one- to three-minute simulated drives. The interactive simulator featured a true 225-degree field of vision, force feedback steering, coordinated seat movements, digital sounds, lights and 3-D graphics. Levels of impairment were determined by formulas based on body weight and number of drinks consumed, and no two drives were the same.

Participants received a ticket detailing all infractions that occurred during the drives — including traffic violations, property damage, crashes and fatalities. *Above, a teen driver experiences the dangers of drunk driving in a simulator.*

After the drives, MGH staff members discussed the medical and societal issues resulting from drunk-driving car crashes. MGHers at the event who helped educate the young drivers were Hasan Alam, MD; Marc de Moya, MD; Amanda Droste; Robert Droste, RN; Cheryl Feloney, NP; Alice Gervasini, RN, PhD; Sandy Muse, NP; Laurie Petrovick, MS; Konstantinos Spaniolas, MD; and George Velmahos, MD.

A survey was given to participants after their drives, and 96 percent of the respondents stated that they would not drink and drive. Additionally, 98 percent of the participants also thought that the event should be held each year to educate teens about the dangers of drunk driving.

The event was made possible with funding from the MGH Making a Difference grant program and was supported by MGH Orthopaedic Trauma, Pediatric Trauma, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and the Massachusetts division of the American Trauma Society.