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The Impact of Insufficient Sleep on Driving Performance of Healthcare Shift Workers

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Sleep is an essential human occupation. Yet, the majority of shift workers obtain insufficient sleep, negatively impacting key cognitive functions required for driving. While shift workers represent approximately one-in-three Canadian workers, they carry a disproportionate burden of injury and fatality arising from motor vehicle crashes. My doctoral research engages multiple methods to examine the impact of insufficient sleep on driving performance in healthcare shift workers. I use both in-depth interviews to explore shift workers' lived experiences of sleepy driving; and, online questionnaires and remote data collection methods quantify differences in sleep, sleepiness, and driving events between healthcare workers on rotating shifts versus standard day work schedules. My passion for this research stems from my clinical occupational therapy rehabilitation practice focused on adults seriously injured in motor vehicle collisions. Through this research, my goal is to better understand shift workers' driving performance and inform strategies to enhance road safety for all.