

## The Driving Cognitions Questionnaire: Development and preliminary psychometric properties

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Received 15 March 2006; received in revised form 5 July 2006; accepted 1 August 2006

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### Abstract

Recent research has suggested that fear of driving is common in the general population. People may have various concerns when driving, and instruments for the assessment of these concerns are lacking. The present paper describes the development and preliminary evaluation of the Driving Cognitions Questionnaire (DCQ). The DCQ is a 20-item scale that measures three areas of driving-related concerns—panic-related, accident-related, and social concerns. In three separate samples from different countries ( $n = 69, 100, \text{ and } 78$ ), the scale showed good internal consistency and substantial correlations with measures of the severity of driving fear. It discriminated well between people with and without driving phobia. It also showed convergent validity with other measures. The questionnaire shows promise for use in research and clinical practice.

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*Keywords:* Driving phobia; Cognition; Panic disorder; Social phobia; Posttraumatic stress disorder; Travel phobia

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Fear of driving is common in the general population (Ehlers, Hofmann, Herda, & Roth, 1994; Mathew, Weinman, Semchuk, & Levin, 1982; Munjack, 1984; Taylor, 2002; Taylor & Deane, 2000; Taylor, Deane, & Podd, 2000). In clinical settings, fear of driving may either present as the

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main problem (i.e., as a specific phobia) or as part of another anxiety disorder (e.g., agoraphobia). It may also develop as a response to a traumatic road crash or motor vehicle accident (MVA; Blanchard & Hickling, 1997). Whereas the phenomenology of driving fears shares many features among these subgroups of people (Blanchard & Hickling, 1997; Ehlers et al., 1994; Hofmann, 1992), the concerns that lead people to be afraid of driving may be quite different. For example, whereas some people may mainly be concerned about having an accident and about the consequences of an accident, others may have concerns about being suddenly incapacitated by anxiety while driving, similar to the concerns of patients with panic disorder. Furthermore, driving fear can be thought of as performance-related fear that is specific to the driving situation, thus overlapping in relevant concerns with social phobia.

Several reliable and valid measures of cognition have been developed to assess the typical concerns of people with panic disorder (e.g., Chambless, Caputo, Bright, & Gallagher, 1984), post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., Foa, Ehlers, Clark, Tolin, & Orsillo, 1999), and social phobia (e.g., Turner, Johnson, Beidel, Heiser, & Lydiard, 2003). None of these specifically addresses driving-related concerns. A specific and economical measure that captures the range of concerns in people with driving phobia is needed to inform cognitive-behavioral treatments of driving phobia, considering that “evidence supports the role of cognitive mediation in fear reduction, regardless of whether treatment is primarily behaviorally or cognitively oriented” (Craske & Rowe, 1997, p. 259).

The present paper describes the development and preliminary validation of the Driving Cognitions Questionnaire (DCQ). The DCQ was developed in three related studies in different countries. Study 1 was conducted by Ehlers, Hofmann and Roth (Ehlers et al., 1994; Hofmann, 1992) at Stanford University, California, USA. Study 2 was completed by Taylor, Deane, and Podd at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. Study 3 was conducted by Ehling and Ehlers at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, UK.

## **1. Study 1: scale development and initial psychometric properties**

The goals of Study 1 were:

1. To develop a brief Driving Cognitions Questionnaire (DCQ) that represents typical concerns of patients with driving phobia.
2. To conduct a preliminary test of the reliability and validity of the scale. Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed by testing (a) whether the DCQ discriminated between individuals with and without driving phobia, (b) whether the DCQ correlated with the severity of driving phobia, and (c) whether the DCQ correlated with measures of anxiety and depression, and measures of cognitions and behaviors typical of patients with panic disorder and agoraphobia (who often show significant fear and avoidance of driving). We expected the DCQ to show moderate correlations with the latter measures (e.g., Ninan & Berger, 2001).

### *1.1. Method*

#### *1.1.1. Participants*

Participants were 42 patients with driving phobia (35 women and 7 men) and 27 control participants (23 women and 4 men) who did not report fear of driving, all of whom were recruited from the study by Ehlers et al. (1994) through media advertisements. Those in the phobic group

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