



My name is Pat Niewoehner. I am an Occupational Therapist and Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist. I attended Maryville University in St. Louis and received a B.A. in Psychology/Sociology and a B.S. in Occupational Therapy. When I was an O.T. student in 1999, I completed 2 of my clinical rotations here at the VA, one in Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and one in Psychiatry. I started working at the VA in 2001 and my time is split among Driver Rehab, Psychiatry, and Home Based Primary Care.

As a Driver Rehab Specialist I can train veterans with a spinal cord injury to drive using auto equipment. This is one of the most fulfilling parts of my job. Training a 21 year old veteran with SCI to use hand controls remains a particularly memorable experience: He wanted to drive to the mall and the McDonalds drive thru and smoke a cigarette, and so he did. Heading back to VA he said, "Now I know I can do anything".

Since 2003, I have been a member of the Washington University Driving and Dementia Education Team, which includes a psychologist and geriatric physician from Washington University; and a Social Work professor from Saint Louis University. Our team has developed a curriculum for physicians and health professionals, Driving & Dementia in Older Adults: Evidence-Based Assessment & Cessation Strategies. Our article resulting from this work was published in the October 2006 issue of "The Gerontologist". We are currently working on a research project titled "Medical Fitness to Drive and a Voluntary State Reporting Law" in collaboration with the Missouri Department of Revenue and the AAA Foundation. We are in the process of developing an older driver curriculum for the cadets at the Missouri State Highway Patrol Academy.

I can be reached in my office (GN48) or at 314-652-4100 or 800-228-5459, ext. 6-3447.

St. Louis MO VA Medical Center
Spinal Cord Injury Service