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**ABSTRACT TITLE:** When Do Patients Return to Driving After Outpatient Foot and Ankle Surgery?

### **INTRODUCTION**

Counseling patients regarding when to return to driving following a foot and ankle procedure can be difficult, and six to nine weeks is often recommended based on brake reaction times quoted in the literature. However, it is the patient that ultimately decides when they are strong enough and mobile enough to operate a vehicle. The purpose of this study is to determine when patients actually return to driving following outpatient foot and ankle surgery, what influences their decision, and if there were any adverse events, such as an accident or ticket.

### **METHODS**

Thirty-seven patients who underwent an outpatient foot and ankle procedure by a single orthopedic surgeon in an outpatient surgery center between September 2016 and December 2017 were retrospectively recruited for this study. Of the thirty-seven patients recruited, seventeen met inclusion criteria and participated in a telephone survey. All patients underwent an open reduction internal fixation, arthrodesis, or soft tissue procedure requiring a lower extremity splint.

### **RESULTS**

Of the patients surveyed, 100% drove a motor vehicle as their primary mode of transportation. Approximately 60% recalled having a discussion with the surgeon regarding when to resume driving, and of these 57% recalled the surgeon recommending return to driving after fourteen weeks. All patients surveyed recalled returning to driving at some point between one and twelve weeks, with 23.5% returning at four weeks and 23.5% returning at ten weeks.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study suggests that despite surgeons' recommendations, patients are returning to driving sooner than traditionally recommended. This may indicate that the surgeon's advice regarding when to return to driving is not as influential as a patient's own self-assessment of their readiness to operate a vehicle after outpatient foot and ankle surgery.