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Medical
BREAKTHROUGHS

Smarter, Safer Cars

Reported January 2010

GRANADA, Spain (Ivanhoe Newswire) -- There are more than six million car accidents every year, and researchers say more than 40 percent of them happen at night. Engineers are trying to change those numbers by building cars that adapt to your driving habits, and warn you when there's trouble ahead.



It happens every 14 seconds...

"A car was coming up really fast behind me and there was nowhere I could go," Paula Winchel recalled to Ivanhoe.

Another driver smashed into the back of her car.

"I have a lot of intense pain at times, where I get headaches," Winchel said. "I have stiffness. There were times when I woke up every single morning with a headache."

A tractor-trailer barreled into the Johnson's car head on.

"I saw the 18 wheeler coming, but I didn't know it was going to happen and just a few seconds it hit," Austin Johnson said.

"This here is the driver's seat," Melanie Johnson said of a photo of the crash. "I was sitting there and as you can see the front end of the car is all pushed in."

Researchers are trying to cut down on crashes by building a more intelligent car.

Engineers at the University of Granada created a system called DrivSCO. The program tracks your driving habits, studies them, and then alerts you.

"Helping us and warning us as a copilot would do as a good friend would do," Eduardo Ros Vidal, a professor at the University of Granada in Granada, Spain, explained.

If you're taking a curve faster than normal, or there's a hazard up ahead on an unfamiliar road, it sounds an alarm.

"They adapt to your way of driving and only warn you if they detect changes in your behavior," Vidal said.

The brains of the operation is a microchip in the engine that is connected to two infrared cameras outside the car. At night this system can also spot bends in the road, and pedestrians, far out of the headlight's reach.

"When they're coming up fast behind me, I definitely get nervous," Winchel said.

Smarter cars are helping to make all of us safer in the driver's seat.

Professor Vidal says he doesn't want to develop a system that drives for you ... only one that reacts to your driving habits. Engineers across Europe are working on the technology that they hope to offer to car manufacturers in the next five years.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.-USA, contributed to the information contained in the TV portion of this report.

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Cleaning up Hospitals

Two million hospital-acquired infections happen each year. The number of infections could be cut in half with better hand washing by medical staff. We'll show you a new device that makes sure everyone has germ-free hands.

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Prior Reports

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