

DOCTOR ON THE ROAD: BMW i4



EV has all the spark expected of a BMW

A practical family car that will not disappoint the keen driver... Independent Practitioner Today's motoring correspondent **Dr Tony Rimmer** is full or praise for this electric Beemer

We are all more comfortable with the familiar. Our patients are most relaxed with a friendly face they know and feel more confident in a clinic or hospital they have been to before.

As practitioners, we work best with a team whom we know and trust. So it is not surprising that it is taking some time for people to embrace unfamiliar electric power and technology when it comes to replacing the family car. Some of us need convincing to make the change.

Car makers have tried to make the switch easier by offering all-electric versions of some of their internal combustion engined (ICE) models to ease the process. Such a car is the BMW i4.

Using underpinnings that are already shared by the regular 3-series and 4-series, it looks iden-

tical to the five-door 4-series Gran Coupé. It carries an 84kWh battery and is available with one or two motors with two- or four-wheel drive.

I have been testing the model that represents the best balance between cost and performance: the eDrive40, which is rear-wheel drive, has 335bhp and would appeal to most medics as a stylish practical family car.

Direct competitors include the Hyundai Ioniq, the Polestar 2 and the Tesla Model Y.

More aerodynamic

The only external styling feature that might put off loyal BMW buyers is the large plastic blanked off front grille.

Because the i4 is all-electric, it does not need as much cooling as an ICE version and the new look is

more aerodynamic to help economy.

As it has such a large battery, the claimed WLTP range is up to 337 miles, which equates to about 270 miles in the real world.

Unfortunately, the large battery means more weight and the i4 weighs around 500kg more than the equivalent 4-series petrol model.

The interior feels a comfortable and premium place to spend time and all BMW owners will immediately feel at home. The only real clue to electrification is the exclusive blue detailing and the very different information on the driver's display.

You sit low in the i4, a pleasant change from the raised seating in SUVs and it makes the drive feel sportier.

Rear seating is comfortable but



The interior feels a comfortable and premium place to spend time and all BMW owners will immediately feel at home



designed more for two passengers rather than three.

The boot is spacious and the rear hatch improves versatility, so even the family dog won't get left out.

Being a BMW, the i4 really needs to deliver the driving dynamics that are expected of the brand and I was relieved to find that, indeed, it does. The steering is sharp and the body control is excellent despite the extra weight of the batteries.

Dynamic chassis control

This is helped by the optional dynamic chassis control which includes air suspension at the rear. This also helps the ride, which is much less brittle and over-firm as it is in cars like the Tesla Model Y.

Punting the i4 down one of my favourite B-roads was a joy and although it isn't as agile as a lighter petrol 4-series, I still had fun.

What is also impressive is the motorway cruising. Well suppressed wind noise combines with the silence of electric travel and the smooth ride to produce a mini-limousine feel and the miles fly by.

Although high speed is the enemy of potential range, a cruise at 70mph is still achieved with an indicated 3.0 miles/kWh economy; a very respectable figure. If you do put your foot down, acceleration is fast and exciting without being too silly.

A 0-62mph time of 5.6 seconds is swift and actually feels faster due to the instant high-torque take-off of electric cars.

The i4 is an excellent electric car and succeeds in combining the attributes of electric motoring with the engaging driving experience expected from all BMWs.

It is more conservative in styling than most other EVs, but I see that as appealing to many potential buyers.

It works as a practical family car that will not disappoint the keen driver and I know that, for many of us medics, that is a very important combination. In the world of EVs,

only the Porsche Taycan – at much greater cost – does better, so this is high praise indeed. ■

Dr Tony Rimmer (right) is a former NHS GP practising in Guildford, Surrey



BMW i4 Edrive 40 SPORT

Body: Five-seat hatchback. Rear-wheel drive

Engine: One electric motor. 84kWh battery

Maximum charge rate: 205kW DC

Power: 335bhp

Torque: 430Nm

Top speed: 118mph

Acceleration: 0-62mph in 5.6 seconds

Claimed range: 337 miles

On-the-road price: £59,390

It is more conservative in styling than most other EVs, but I see that as appealing to many potential buyers