Wheels: An e-mail from Mick says, “My son has a 2001 Dodge Ram 1500 4 x 4 truck, regular cab, short bed with 45,000 miles. The truck has developed a severe and violent shake at highway speeds when he hits a bump. The only way to stop this shaking is to slow to 20 mph. This is quite dangerous on the interstate highway. He has searched the Internet for recalls and has found many people experiencing the same problem. No one has conclusive ideas for the repair. He has replaced the stabilizer bar and its ball joints. He has replaced the steering tie rods and their ball joints. Still shakes! The tires are balanced and are the correct size; he maintains 40 psi in tires. We raised the front of his truck and grabbed the tires at 12 and 6 o'clock and tried to see if there is play in the upper and lower ball joints; we cannot get any noticeable play! Will weak shocks cause this shake or can you suggest something else to look for? The truck will move up and down, when pushed and released, more than a couple of times! Your help will be appreciated. Several hundred dollars have been spent already and we don't want to throw any more money at something without success!”

Halderman: The shake after hitting a bump and not stopping until the speed is reduced is commonly caused by a front toe setting that is not correct. The ball joints on this vehicle do tend to wear prematurely and these can be the root cause of the wheel alignment not being correct. To properly test ball joints, the lower control arm must be compressed. In other words, lift the vehicle with a jack under the control arm and then test for free play. Jacking the vehicle off the ground using a jack under the frame will cause the spring to exert force on the ball joint to keep the joint compressed and no free play will be detected.

Regarding the shock absorbers, it appears from your description that they are worn. While I do not think replacing the shocks will cure the shaking, I would certainly replace them and then see if the problem is reduced to an acceptable level.

Then, if the problem is still present, I suggest that you have a professional test and replace the ball joints if needed and then have an alignment performed. This should stop the problem.