



A look at Functional, Comprehensive Medical, and Environmental Assessments...

Functional Assessments

Functional assessments measure the patient's ability to handle activities of daily living such as transferring, ambulating, and bathing. Transferring can be assessed by determining the patient's ability to move from one location to another, such as from a chair to a bed. A patient's ability to walk from one location to another, such as from the bedroom to the bathroom, helps to assess the patient's ambulatory skills. With bathing, assess a patient's ability to get into and out of the bathtub without assistance. The purpose of a functional assessment is to identify the presence or severity of disease, measure a need for care, and monitor change over time. Functional assessments can also evaluate the following; lower extremity weakness, gait abnormalities, balance abnormalities, appropriateness of assistive devices, and need for personal assistance.

Comprehensive Medical Assessments

Comprehensive medical assessments can be useful in predicting falls in the elderly, since falls sometimes are a signal of unmet medical needs. Therefore, an in-depth diagnostic process can be initiated. Many times, this type of assessment is used for patients who have already been identified as fall risks. This assessment can give an in-depth analysis of patient functioning, which can assist in creating effective fall prevention interventions.

Environmental Assessments

Proper maintenance of a facility's environment is essential to reducing falls. Information that may be included in an environmental review includes; an engineering inspection list, patient records, meeting minutes, Joint Commission survey reports, Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspection reports, insurance company inspection reports, existing policies, internal audits, performance improvement reports to administration, event reports, Workers Compensation records, and injury and illness logs. By reviewing these records, health care staff can assess data for trends that reflect the effectiveness of current falls reduction efforts. Site surveys can assist in identifying actual environmental fall hazards such as slippery floors, spills, wet areas without signs, floors with wax buildup, cluttered areas, poor lighting, broken handrails, changes in floor grading, and the walking (or running) habits of staff, visitors and patients. After an initial assessment of the environmental risks, fall prevention teams can identify interventions to reduce environmental risk factors. Common interventions may include high-traction flooring and slip-resistant footwear, good lighting, assistive devices, appropriate architectural design, and proper equipment and environmental maintenance.

References: www.jointcommission.org