



The Importance of Fall Risk Assessment - Requires a Team Approach

Third of a Series on Fall Risk Assessment...

Some health care organizations are too small or do not have the budgets to have a dedicated team specifically for fall prevention. Therefore, those organizations usually have staff members assessing fall risks while juggling other assignments. While other health care organizations have the staff and the resources necessary, and therefore should use a team approach to address patient fall risks. While nurses and direct patient care staff have the advantage of daily contact with the patient, all staff members should be involved in fall prevention to make it successful.

Simply the awareness of patient fall risk could help all departments become involved in prevention. For example, the environmental services staff may become more diligent in placing “Wet Floor” signs or may prompt staff to notice a patient that needs help. It is imperative that all support staff are trained to assist a patient that is at risk for falls.

The most efficient way to reduce falls is of course using a team approach. Whether the team is large or small, an organization has a more accurate and comprehensive fall risk evaluation. Also, the team can usually identify more effective interventions since the members bring a variety of perspectives to the issue.

Some of the advantages of a team approach include:

- Teams usually are more successful in implementing complex plans.
- Teams develop more creative solutions to difficult problems.
- Teams build commitment and support for new ideas among staff members.
- Teams become part of the learning process.

Usually when identifying individuals to assist in preventing patient falls, nurses are the first identified since they have the advantage of having the most contact with the patient. However, even though nurses are an integral part, it is important to involve all staff in fall preventions. In order to have a successful team, organizations should include individuals from many departments and job descriptions. Clinical and non-clinical staff members can bring unique perspectives or skills to the group. Most importantly, fall prevention is everyone's responsibility.

References: www.jointcommission.org