“Keep a Grasp on Patient Safety” A Fall Prevention Pilot Project to Increase Gait Belt Use

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Background
Patient falls in the hospital setting are a serious and ongoing concern. Hospitals struggle with identifying and implementing strategies that will decrease patient falls. Many of these strategies encompass instilling methods to decrease potentially dangerous falls while continuing to mobilize hospitalized patients. The opportunity to identify and implement strategies that can decrease patient falls as well as maintain and enhance mobility can improve patient outcomes. Safe patient-handling tools such as gait belts can help caregivers manage and mitigate injuries from unexpected patient falls. Gait belt training and resources have been provided but staff continue to move and transfer patients without the use of assistive devices. Use of gait belts are a nurse driven intervention in our organization and encouraged to be utilized to assist in ambulation and transfer but our monitoring showed that this intervention was underutilized. A survey revealed bedside caregivers would find it beneficial for a gait belt to be placed in a visible location in patients rooms that would benefit from gait belt use.

Project Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Audit Unit Census = 33</th>
<th>Internal Audit Unit Census = 34</th>
<th>2nd Audit Unit Census = 31</th>
<th>3rd Audit Unit Census = 31</th>
<th>4th Audit Unit Census = 26</th>
<th>5th Audit Unit Census = 34</th>
<th>6th Audit Unit Census = 26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patient population on unit at risk for a fall injury</td>
<td>91% (30)</td>
<td>78% (22)</td>
<td>82% (26)</td>
<td>67% (30)</td>
<td>88% (31)</td>
<td>76% (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(30/33 = 91)</td>
<td>(22/28 = 78)</td>
<td>(26/34 = 82)</td>
<td>(30/45 = 67)</td>
<td>(31/36 = 88)</td>
<td>(24/32 = 76)</td>
<td>(7/27 = 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified fall risk patients that would benefit from gait belt use using audit criteria</td>
<td>60% (18)</td>
<td>77% (17)</td>
<td>75% (20)</td>
<td>75% (20)</td>
<td>65% (15)</td>
<td>62% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18/30 = 60)</td>
<td>(17/22 = 77)</td>
<td>(20/26 = 75)</td>
<td>(20/26 = 75)</td>
<td>(15/23 = 65)</td>
<td>(14/23 = 62)</td>
<td>(4/7 = 57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients who would benefit from gait belt use that had a gait belt readily available in their room</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>29% (5)</td>
<td>10% (3)</td>
<td>33% (5)</td>
<td>60% (6)</td>
<td>19% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next Steps
“Keep a Grasp on Patient Safety” showed that improving the accessibility and visibility of an effective safe patient-handling tool can encourage its use and augment patient and staff safety. Due to our successes, this endeavor was reproduced and initiated on a 30 bed orthopedic acute care unit in the fall of 2014. Additionally, the PDOSA process and subsequent interventions utilized in this project were shared with the network wide fall prevention workgroup and safe patient handling committees. Ongoing communication amongst unit nurse leaders and physical therapy are promoted to encourage gait belt usage and proper patient selection.

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