

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

Laura Walker RN, BSN, CCRN
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Laura_J.Walker@lvhn.org

Mary Ellen O'Connell RN, BSN, MSN, MBA
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Mary_Ellen.OConnell@lvhn.org

Amy Giesler RN, BSN
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Amy_L.Giesler@lvhn.org

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“Keep a Grasp on Patient Safety”

A Fall Prevention Pilot Project to Increase Gait Belt Use

Laura Walker, RN, BSN, CCRN; Mary Ellen O’Connell, RN, MSN, MBA; Amy Giesler, RN, BSN
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, PA

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.

Plan

PROJECT AIM: Improve use and compliance of a safe patient-handling tool to enhance patient and employee safety.

Do

Setting: 36 bed cardiac step down unit in an acute care setting.

Project leaders: A representative from the fall prevention workgroup, occupational safety, and a designated unit staff member volunteered to lead the project.

Actions

- A gait belt demonstration E-Learning module assigned to unit staff.
- Staff in-services on project’s aims and processes provided.
- Wall hooks purchased and installed in a visible place in all patient rooms.
- Audit criteria and audit tools developed by project leaders.
- Real time chart audit and visual audit performed every two weeks over a three month period.
- Visual audit tool developed to assess for evidence of gait belt usage.
- Chart audit tool developed to discover patients that were identified as a fall risk and at risk of injury and candidates for gait belt usage.



Study

The Plan-Do-Study-Act framework was implemented and encompassed a total of six cycles that identified each cycle’s barriers and successes. Actions were developed and implemented based from data analysis obtained from each PDSA cycle.

Audit results revealed an overall 38% increase in having gait belts readily accessible and visible. These outcomes demonstrate a visual cue improved the visibility and accessibility of an available safe patient-handling tool that can be used to enhance patient and employee safety.

Act

- Establish partnerships.
- Unit selection for trial.
- Incorporation of current fall prevention practices.
- Development of a computer based learning module.
- Creation of audit screening tools.

P

- Encourage staff engagement.
- Staff assignment to learning module.
- Installation of wall hooks.
- Pre-audit data collection.
- Serial visual & chart audit collections.

D

- Transparency of audit results with staff.
- Share all identified missed opportunities and successes with unit leaders & staff.
- Sought staff feedback on their perception of the value and barriers of gait belt use.

S

- Ensure adequate supply par levels.
- Secure wall hooks and signage.
- Foster staff engagement & accountability.
- Project leader participation in morning safety huddles.
- Provide consistent support, reward, and visibility for staff.

A

Project Outcomes

	Pre-Audit Unit Census = 33	Internal Audit Unit Census = 28	2nd Audit Unit Census = 34	3rd Audit Unit Census = 31	4th Audit Unit Census = 26	5th Audit Unit Census = 34	6th Audit Unit Census = 26
Patient population on unit at risk for a fall injury.	91% (30) (30/33 = 91)	78% (22) (22/28 = 78)	82% (28) (28/34 = 82)	65% (20) (20/31 = 65)	88% (23) (23/26 = 88)	76% (26) (26/34 = 76)	27% (7) (7/26 = 27)
Identified fall risk patients that would benefit from gait belt use using audit criteria.	60% (18) (18/30 = 60)	77% (17) (17/22 = 77)	35% (10) (10/28 = 35)	75% (15) (15/20 = 75)	65% (15) (15/23 = 65)	62% (16) (16/26 = 62)	57% (4) (4/7 = 57)
Patients who would benefit from gait belt use that had a gait belt readily available in their room.	None (0)	29% (5) (5/17 = 29)	10% (1) (1/10 = 10)	33% (5) (5/15 = 33)	60% (9) (9/15 = 60)	19% (3) (3/16 = 19)	75% (3) (3/4 = 75)

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 PDSA 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.

Funding Source:

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