Reduction of Patient Handling Injuries on CC7

The Problem
Safe Patient Handling (SPH) equipment, including ceiling lifts and portable lifts, have been installed on almost every medical/surgical inpatient unit in the medical center, with plans to complete installation by the end of this fiscal year (FY). In FY13, 78 employees were injured across the medical center at a total cost of over $625K. Seven of these injuries occurred on CC7 at a cost of almost $77K. Ceiling lifts were installed on CC7 in January of 2013, but all seven of the injuries occurred after the lifts were installed. It became clear that installation of ceiling lifts with initial training would not be enough to effect a reduction of injuries.

Aim/Goal
The goal of this project was to eliminate patient handling injuries on CC7 and measure impact on reported injuries, lost work days, and total cost of workers’ compensation expenses.

The Team
- Tracy Lee, RN, BSN, OCN – CC7 Nurse Manager
- Robin McLaughlin, RN, RRT – CC7 Unit Based Educator
- Suzanne Burger, MSN, RN – CC7 Unit Based Educator
- Nurses and PCTs on CC7
- Jacki Chechile, PT, MSPT – Safe Patient Handling Clinical Coordinator
- Beth Christensen PT, DPT – Safe Patient Handling Clinical Coordinator

The Interventions
A meeting was set up between the nurse manager and educators on CC7 and the SPH team to formulate a plan to change the culture on CC7 from a manual lifting unit to a no/minimal lift unit. The plan included:
- Appointment of additional SPH champions who attended an off-site, four-hour training at the vendor’s training facility
- CC7 SPH champions responding whenever lifting assistance was requested to help problem solve and remind staff to use the equipment.
- On unit in-servicing on ceiling lifts for all staff
- Daily discussion of SPH equipment in huddles, staff meetings, and patient hand-offs.
- Continued in-servicing/education at CC7’s annual competency days
- Monitoring of SPH linens to ensure availability to staff
- Feedback to staff, including monthly reports on injuries and a news story featured on the BIMC portal’s “How are We Doing” section

The Results/Progress to Date

Five injuries occurred in FY12, prior to ceiling lift installation. Seven injuries occurred after ceiling lift installation in FY13. One injury occurred immediately after our first meeting about an intervention. There were no injuries from October 2013 through December 2014.

Lessons Learned
The most important lesson learned is that effecting a culture change requires a team approach. Engaging front-line caregivers in the process and empowering them to utilize lift equipment for all patient handling tasks is the only way to make this change. Additionally, the act of installing equipment does not, in itself, lead to a reduction in employee injuries. It is the commitment to continued education and discussion by the unit that leads to a reduction in injuries. Lastly, we discovered that linen availability can be a limiting factor in the use of equipment.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
Based on the knowledge that installation of lifts on its own does not lead to a decrease in injuries, continued bi-annual SPH refreshers by the SPH team, as well as unit-initiated education, will continue to occur. Feedback, both positive and constructive, will also continue to be communicated to the unit. A new linen management system is in the pipeline to help ensure better availability of SPH repositioning sheets, high-back slings, and straps. Given our success with this model of injury reduction, it will be utilized on other units as necessary.

For more information, contact:
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