

BETTY'S TIP FOR SEPTEMBER

In Your Facility, Who Needs to Know About Falls?



Every facility has some kind of a program to prevent as many falls as possible – or should have. We'll address program ideas another time. But whatever your program is, who on facility staff needs to be aware of it? One word: EVERYONE! From the custodian mopping the hallway to the Administrator. Literally everyone.

Does that mean that every single employee has equal knowledge about falls and your facilities policies? No, of course not. But let's look at a simple scenario to see what can happen.

Let's suppose that your facility has fall risk patients wear orange wristbands. One of these patients manages to get up and out of her room, and is ambling down the hallway reasonably well. The janitor cleaning the floor just outside her doorway is the first to see her, but to him, the orange wristband means nothing, because no one has told him about that policy, so he assumes it's all right for her to be there. 45 seconds later, after rounding the corner to the next hallway, down she goes.

Was it the janitor's fault? Absolutely not – how could he know? And let's take it a step further. If he *had known* about the wristbands, would he have known what to do? Is he expected to assist the patient? Probably not, but does he say anything to her? Does he rush to the nurses' station to tell a nurse? Is he equipped with some electronic means to alert someone? What if he actually sees the fall happen, then what?

Some of the answers may seem obvious to you and me, but obvious doesn't quite cut it in court or in the operating room after a broken hip. Some of your staff do not necessarily have the same healthcare mindset as we do. The point here is that the facility should have an established falls protocol so that he (or anyone else) knows what to do.

SUMMARY: You and I know how important it is to prevent falls, but the average person does not appreciate the caliber of the problem. As healthcare professionals we all have a responsibility to educate anyone in a position to help.