



The Resident

When trying to implement an effective fall reduction program, quite often we look to the fall as the issue, when in fact we need to look to the resident as the answer. Trying to identify a fall champion or continually educate staff on fall reduction techniques is an ongoing focus. Where we can start to really make a difference in our employees' approach to falls is to begin to recognize every piece of the puzzle that each staff member holds to help identify the resident's true needs.

Start here. Call an interdisciplinary team and invite the regular housekeepers, maintenance personnel, dietary, activity personnel and nursing staff who interact with a resident who is at high risk for falls. Go around the table and ask each person the exact same question, in the exact same way, "Mary, what do you know about this resident?" "John, what do you know about this resident?"

You want to gather ALL of the information that the staff knows about this resident. What you are seeking is that one piece of the puzzle that everyone missed because the focus was on reducing the fall not understanding the resident. For example, maybe Mary, the housekeeper shares that she usually empties trash around 10 a.m. and the resident is always half asleep and leaning in his/her chair.

Great, then we know that this resident needs to be encouraged to take a nap at mid morning or requires some positioning devices to reduce the likelihood of falls when he/she leans. Maybe John, from maintenance, says to you, "when I went in to fix the resident's heat, she told me that she was really sad that her daughter has not been in to visit." Now, we can make an intervention to call the daughter, express this sentiment to her and request that she come in to help elevate spirits, thereby reducing depression and the likelihood of a future fall.

Once you have gathered some new interventions, now engage the staff to partner with you and the resident on helping to reduce future falls. Encourage non-clinical personnel to ask the resident, "is there anything I can get you before I leave?" Imagine if the housekeeper can place the tissue box closer to the resident, which would reduce the need for the resident to push the call light for the exact same request or try to get it without seeking help and then possible falls.

You will have to educate staff on what they can and cannot do in the scope of their own job - however, by using this technique you will find that all employees in your building will begin to take ownership of reducing falls, and nursing will be able to claim time back from answering call lights all day to managing resident's care more effectively. While you document these interventions and interdisciplinary meetings, you will begin to show a comprehensive program that has been implemented to reduce the likelihood of future falls for this resident.

Betty