

Establishing a medical protocol for falls management

Case study

Overview

In 2011 a Monash Health improvement quality medical officer (IQMO) conducted a review of falls covering all incident severity rating (ISR) 1 and 2 falls over a four-month period. The review randomly selected medical records, with a total of 15 in-depth retrospective files reviewed. Patient admissions were value-stream mapped to help brainstorm the issues that led to falls.

Summary

A medical protocol for falls risk assessment and post-fall management was developed and lanyards were created for junior doctors to wear and use as a point of reference. A similar initiative was created for nursing staff because 60 per cent of falls with head strike were not reported to medical staff.

Key changes

- Established a communication process for post-fall management
- Improved medical management of falls to reduce potential falls
- Junior medical staff provided input to the organisation's falls committee
- Established a falls assessment process on admission

What worked well

- Strong engagement with senior medical staff
- Seeking the perspective of junior medical officers into managing falls
- Improved communication between disciplines
- Creating a visual tool for junior medical officers and nursing staff
- Greater understanding among staff regarding falls prevention and post-fall management

What could be improved

Ensuring medical staff perform a medical falls risk assessment on all patients.

A proposal has been made that all program medical heads review all falls within their program to audit if a pre-falls medical assessment has been undertaken.

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Health service involved

Monash Health

Project name

Establishing a Medical Protocol for Falls Patients

Date of completion

Ongoing

Key indicator

Number of falls (ISR 1)

Change in performance

Falls rates have fluctuated, and the organisation is hoping that, with the proposed review process, pre-fall medical reviews will increase, helping to reduce falls more consistently

Established financial benefit

Yet to be determined

Patient experience

Improved pre-fall medical management to avoid potential harm to patients