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Williamson Turn Stand Reduces Back Injuries, Improves Patient Outcomes And Decreases Nursing Workload

By Nancy Kennedy

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, back injuries are the nation's number one workplace safety problem, and in the health care industry, over one million annual back injuries translate into billions of dollars in costs. In an effort to reduce ergonomic injuries to American workers, OSHA introduced comprehensive industry-specific guidelines in April of last year.

The OSHA guidelines are also task-specific, and one of the recommendations intended to reduce back injuries is to minimize the manual lifting of patients in all cases and to eliminate lifting where possible. This may seem like an impossible order, given that patients in various states of sedation, disability and illness require moving and transferring in every aspect of their treatment, diagnosis and activities of daily living. Add to that the pervasive staffing shortages that afflict both acute care and long term care facilities, and you have what appears to be an unrealistic standard.

There is, however, a remarkable and highly effective new patient transfer device designed for precisely this purpose: to safely transfer patients from one seated position to another, eliminating the need for manual lifting. Better yet, this device only requires one staff member to operate it. And it is low cost, portable, lightweight and maintenance-free.

The Williamson Turn Stand was developed by Lester Williamson of Ford City, PA, to ease his frustration over managing this aspect of his elderly father's care. It is a pivoting device that enables a patient to transfer safely and easily from bed to chair, chair to toilet or chair to car, attended by a single caregiver. The device is FDA-approved and has been endorsed by the Center for Traumatic Disease at

Penn State University, whose research showed that the Williamson Turn Stand can reduce dangerous twisting and rotation by 86%. It was found to be far more effective than other patient lift devices or the "hug" method which is commonly employed but very risky to staff.

Janet Bykowski, R.N., a nurse manager at an East Coast medical center, was so impressed by the Turn Stand that she campaigned to convince her employer to purchase one for each patient care unit.

"It's the most amazing device! We like them so much that they are now standard equipment and we wonder how we ever managed without them," she says. "It's like having another staff person – one that doesn't go to lunch or call off. Instead of having to wait for another staff person to be free to help you transfer a patient, you can do it yourself. And it's so much safer for both the patient and the staff. In the rush of a busy unit, it's easy to neglect good body mechanics but the Williamson Turn Stand doesn't put the staff at risk.

"The Turn Stand also helps the patient to feel safe and retain dignity. Patients have a fear of falling and sometimes during a transfer their instinct is to grab the nurse around the neck, which can cause serious injury and pain. With the Turn Stand, the patient has something sturdy to hold onto so he can feel secure."

Bykowski has found that physicians like the Turn Stand because it means that their patients are out of bed more often. Immobility is hazardous to patients, often leading to complications and inhibiting recovery. The Turn Stand can be especially helpful for patients with strokes, partial amputations, advanced arthritis, weakness due to cancer or cardiopulmonary disease, multiple sclerosis, joint replacement surgery, Parkinson's or morbid obesity. It is quite useful in geriatric and rehabilitation settings and can even be used at home.



"As the nursing workforce gets older and the shortage becomes more critical, it is essential for hospitals to find ways to retain their experienced staff who may consider leaving due to the physical challenges. This is a tool that I believe can actually help to retain nurses. It really facilitates the most injury-prone aspect of patient care," she adds.

A simple medical device that can reduce work-related injuries and subsequent costs, improve patient safety, improve patient outcomes and reduce length of stay, increase staff satisfaction and quality of worklife, help retain nurses and keep the risk managers happy, too? It may sound too good to be true but the Williamson Turn Stand is winning raves from those who have tried it. The Turn Stand is available for purchase, rental or lease and can be used by family members as well as healthcare professionals.

For more information, call (724) 763-2285 or go to www.turnstand.com.