

**Reducing Patient Injury Due to Falls**  
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**Problem:**

In the United States, one out of every three adults 65 years old or older falls each year. Falls are one of the most common adverse events in the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospitals (VA) and the consequences can be devastating. At present, over 38% of the veteran population is over 65.

**Evidence:**

The number of falls at our facility in fiscal year 2004 was 595 with 9 of those resulting in major injury. Therefore, prevention of falls and fall related injuries has remained a top priority of the VA. Because we provide restraint-free environment for the patients' our philosophy is to maximize independence and mobility.

**Strategy:**

A multidisciplinary falls Committee was assembled at the Medical Center to do a focused review of interventions that would decrease the risk of falls and serious injuries from falls.

**Practice Change:**

The key changes made by the committee: Initiation of a fall scale. The fall scale was created in template form and added to **Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS)** which made it assessable to nurses as well as providers. Based on current research findings, equipment was purchased to assist in preventing/decreasing a patient chance of serious injury in the event he/she does fall. A falls prevention program was developed **Staff Against Falls Everywhere (S.A.F.E.)** and implemented throughout the Medical Center. In addition, every unit has a trained falls nurse who provides continual education and guidance for staff.

**Evaluation:**

Since the initiation of the S.A.F.E program there has been an increase in the use of patient safety equipment causing a decrease in severity and number of patient injuries. Due to the increase in staff awareness and education, the reporting of fall related incidents has also increased.

**Recommendations:**

The most important lesson learned is the "Think big but start small approach" it has provided positive results that have lead to an effective falls related injury reduction and falls prevention program.

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