Importance of Developing and Implementing Safe Patient Handling

Name

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Rehabilitation is an intervention set to assist individuals with disabilities to improve their health conditions and interactions within their environment(*Rehabilitation*, n.d.). The healthcare system is ever-evolving and seeks to improve the patient's care, safety and the best outcome for patient recovery. It is important that patients feel safe and cared for during recovery to prevent escalation of their illness and prolonged recovery time. This can be achieved through having a policy on how patients are handled in rehabilitation centres . This essay explores the importance of developing the policy and implementing it in rehabilitation centres.

To begin with, patient safety is of importance in the SPH. Manual handling of patients puts them at risk of injuries such as hip fractures, bruises, skin tears and many more as they are vulnerable to falls and injuries during movement. Developing a safe patient handling procedure protects the patients during transfers,  mobility exercises and repositioning to prevent such injuries(Humrickhouse & Knibbe, 2016).  It is important to ensure patient movement is done safely to reduce the likelihood of falling, quick recovery and restore dependence.

Manual handling of patients alone is ineffective in reducing patient injuries in the rehabilitation center. It leads to restriction of the patient's ability to move with ease, during movement patients may be put in positions that may lead to them having a loss of dignity. This will in turn impact their recovery and rehabilitation. Limited mobility has been associated with risk factors such as pressure ulcers and musculoskeletal (MS) which can be prevented through SPH(Humrickhouse & Knibbe, 2016). Safe patient handling prevents or promotes safe mobility to restore patients' independence ,using a mechanical device makes the patient feel more secure and comfortable. In addition, Having a structured procedure that guides the health provider will assist in ensuring the safety of patients while in recovery in the rehabilitation centers.

Secondly, the importance of developing and implementing safe patient handling procedures in rehabs is the need to meet complaints and regulatory standards. National and Regulatory bodies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration(OSHA) in the United States have policies and guidelines that rehabilitation should follow to provide a safe and healthy workspace for both the patients and the therapists. Other bodies such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH )and the American Nurses Association(ANA) have recommended guidelines(Humrickhouse & Knibbe, 2016). Adherence to these guidelines ensures rehabilitation centres are standardised and provides quality care for patients in the facilities.

The healthcare worker's safety is also an important factor to consider when developing and implementing safe patient-handling procedures. Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) affect the muscles, nerves and tendons due to repetitive movement or poor posture. Work-related Musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD), injuries are among the prevalent kinds of injuries among occupational and therapist caregivers due to lifting and repositioning patients' actions .  In an 8-hour shift, a healthcare worker can lift to 1.8 tons according to the Centers for Disease Control(CDC)(*Safe Patient Handling | ARN*, n.d.). The SPH has limits on the weight occupational therapists can lift manually and guidelines on how to use the SPH technologies by healthcare workers.

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders(WMSD ) affect the caregivers' ability to work and perform at their workplace resulting in reduced productivity, at times it may result in the end of their career There are an estimated 130 million cases of Musculoskeletal cases(Workplace, 2001). Current studies indicate that there is a  27% work-related injury or moderate to severe WMSD in occupational and physical therapists and a 1-mo prevalence of 48% for mild to moderate WMSD(Darragh et al., 2014). The majority of these injuries are a result of manual handling of patients and related activities which can be avoided by implementing safe patient Handling.

Safe Patient handling development and implementation has beneficial economic implications(*Safe Patient Handling Programs: Effectiveness and Cost Savings*, n.d.). The WSDM injuries among workers can lead to them missing work leading to shortages or understaffed caregivers in the rehabilitation centres. ANA has reported that there is an estimated 23000 lost work by health workers due to injuries and  44% are from health care occupations(*Safe Patient Handling | ARN*, n.d.). Research indicates that by implementing a safe patient handling procedure there are reduced injuries among health care givers resulting in reduced lost time from leaves and Costs from Workers compensation.

Injuries caused by WSDM are the most common cause of Workers' compensation in the healthcare system(Olinski & Norton, 2017). The associated direct costs may include money spent on healthcare, lost wages and legal fees can be significant. In addition, there may be costs incurred on overtime payments for healthcare who cover for their injured colleagues, the cost of replacement of healthcare workers and the cost of training new healthcare workers within the rehab centres. This may in turn result in less productivity and morale among the healthcare workers being overworked thus affecting the facility's retention and turnover.

Another reason to develop and implement a safe patient-handling procedure is to have unifying standards and procedures that healthcare workers can use to follow when handling patients in rehabilitation centres. The Association of Rehabilitation Nurses in conjunction with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and Veterans Health Administration produced a whitepaper highlighting the safe patient Handling procedures that can be used by any member of the rehabilitation centres(*Safe Patient Handling Toolkit | ARN*, n.d.). This is an important factor as it ensures there are improved healthcare standards given that rehabilitation centres have a point of reference and follow the same procedures and protocols when handling patients.

In conclusion, developing and implementing a safe handling procedure is important as it reduces risks from injuries and promotes independence in the patient's recovery. It also protects the healthcare worker from injuries caused by repetitive work while handling patients such as Musculoskeletal disorders. In addition, It ensures rehabilitation facilities provide quality care to their patients by adhering to standards and procedures developed by various bodies such as the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses(*Patient Care | ARN*, n.d.).

In addition, by reducing the risks of injuries by the healthcare provider through the adoption of the Safe Handling procedure healthcare workers have a better working environment. Moreover, there is reduced absentia of healthcare workers who take time from work therefore resulting in increased morale among the healthcare workers, improving retention of care workers and reduced costs associated with injuries from the patient or the healthcare worker(Physician, 2019). Development and implementation of Safe Patient Handling has shown to reduce 58% of injuries, 86%reduction of lost time and 90% reduction of lost time.

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