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Preventing Falls and Fall-Related Injuries for CKD Patients with “Blood and Bone” Risks on an Inpatient Nephrology Nursing Unit

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Falls are a serious safety concern for hospitalized patients because of the potential debilitating injuries that can occur. CKD patients have an increased risk of falling due to generalized weakness, neuropathy, blood pressure control issues, and blood glucose regulation difficulties, just to name a few. For these patients, changes to the body, attributed to the disease, can seriously endanger them if they experience a fall. Many hospitalized CKD patients, new to dialysis or having complications from being under dialyzed, may be at risk for hemorrhaging due to uremic anemia and/or albuminuria. CKD patients also have a substantially higher incidence of fractures due to CKD mineral bone disease (CKD-MBD) or renal osteodystrophy. Knowing these risks for their patients, an inpatient nephrology nursing unit took action after noticing a marked increase in their patient falls and fall-related injuries.

Understanding the significance of these negative outcomes for their CKD patients, a quality improvement project was initiated. The unit’s nephrology nurses, support staff, unit leaders, nephrology clinical nurse specialist, and clinical nurse educator developed a plan to target not only high fall risk patients, but also those at risk for a fall-related injury.

All patients identified as having a high fall risk were placed on the Fall Prevention Bundle. This bundle includes evidence-based interventions such as nonskid socks, use of gait belts, bed and chair alarms, hourly rounding, and safety education. All high fall risk patients were then screened for injury risk. Those identified as having a hemorrhaging/bleeding risk (“Blood”) and/or a fracture risk (“Bone”) received additional protection by being placed on the Injury Prevention Bundle. The Injury Prevention Bundle includes utilization of specialty low beds, floor mats, and white board communication in patient rooms.

After implementation of these bundles, there was a significant decrease in falls and fall-related injuries. The fall rate went from 4.56 (2018) to 2.98 (2019), a 35% reduction. The falls with injury rate decreased from a rate of 0.99 (2018) to 0.14 (2019), an 86% reduction.

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