Bariatric patients and the use of mobile hoists: user experiences from three hospitals in South Australia

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Abstract

Nursing personnel are consistently identified as one of the occupational groups most at risk of work-related musculoskeletal disorders. During the moving and handling of bariatric patients, the weight of the patient combined with atypical body mass contributes to a significant risk of injury to the care provider and patient (Baptiste, 2007). This is further compounded by the shape, mobility and co-operation of the patient. The aim of this study was determine user experiences and design requirements for mobile hoists with bariatric patients.

Structured interviews were conducted with six experienced injury management staff from the Manual Task Services department of three hospitals in Adelaide, South Australia. All staff had experience in patient handling, the use of patient handling equipment and the provision of patient handling training. A series of open-ended questions were structured around five main themes: 1) patient factors; 2) building/vehicle space and design; 3) equipment and furniture; 4) communication; and 5) staff issues (Hignett and Griffiths, 2009). Questions focussed on the use of mobile hoists for lifting and transferring bariatric patients. Interviews were supplemented with a walk-through of the hospital to view the types of mobile hoists used, and the location and storage of equipment.

Across the three hospitals there were differing classification systems to define bariatric patients. Ensuring patient dignity, respect and privacy were viewed as important in the management and rehabilitation of bariatric patients. Storage and space constraints were considered factors restricting the use of mobile floor hoists, with ceiling hoists being the preferred method for patient transfers. When using mobile floor hoists, the forces required to push, pull and manoeuvre, as well as sudden unstable movements of the hoist were considered important risks factors giving rise to a risk of injury to the care provider. Record keeping and purchasing policies appeared to inhibit the effective use of patient handling equipment.

The moving and handling of bariatric patients presents complex and challenging issues. A co-ordinated and collaborative approach for moving and handling bariatric patients is needed across the range of care providers. Designers must consider both user and patient requirements.

Key words: Patient transfers, Hoist, Bariatric patient, Musculoskeletal risk factors, Ergonomics

References
