Date: 10/10/2012
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Falls Prevention Policy

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to inform all staff of their responsibilities in regard to promoting service user safety by helping to prevent falls. The policy also aims to ensure that service users and their carers or relatives have confidence in the falls prevention practices.

Scope of policy
This policy is to be followed by all staff working for myhomecare.ie.

Individual Staff members
- Be aware of and comply with myhomecare.ie policies procedures and guidance.
- Take part in training, including attending updates in order to maintain their skills and are familiar with procedures.

Risk Assessment
Identifying those at risk is the first stage in falls prevention. All service users newly referred must be assessed for risk of falls using a falls risk assessment tool.

The risk of falls will be discussed with the service user/carer and a care plan will be completed which will identify if the client is at low, medium or high risk of fall. Reassessment will be completed weekly unless a significant change in the service user's condition occurs e.g. becomes acutely ill, if they experience a fall or near miss, or if deemed appropriate by a health care professional.

Rating

Low Falls Risk (0) 0-15 Implement actions for identified individual risk factors, & recommend health promotion behaviour to minimise future ongoing risk (eg. Increased physical activity, good nutrition).

Medium Falls Risk (1) 16-24: Implement actions for identified individual risk factors.

High Falls Risk (2) > 24: Implement actions for identified individual risk factors and implement additional actions for high falls risk.

All service users, their relatives and homecare workers will be offered information verbally and in writing about measures they can take to prevent falls. Many aspects of the environment may have an impact on the risk of falls or injury. Environmental risk assessment must be undertaken and updated following any changes to the care environment.

It is acknowledged that patients deemed at high risk of falling warrant closer observation. It may be appropriate to use one-to-one observation for a short term risk of frequent falling, usually in the context of acute illness. If there is a long-term risk of frequent falling, alternative options will be identified on the care plan.

It is important to ensure that any equipment used, particularly lifting and mobility aids, are in correct working order. All equipment must be recorded in an asset register. It is important to keep records showing servicing, planned maintenance and breakdown repair.

In the event of a fall, the following actions should then be taken:
- Ensure the area is safe and there is adequate space to assist the patient.

Attempt to clarify how long ago and how the fall occurred
- Remove immediate risks, e.g. turn off gas fires
- Perform preliminary examination (in order to inform any assistance of urgency) without moving patient

This should include:

- Establishing consciousness.
- Identifying possible cause for any obvious discomfort / pain
- Identifying level of understanding/co-operation, whether the patient
- is able to get up with prompting or, assistance
- Undertaking baseline observations.

If assessment suggests patient has not sustained an injury or ill effect, and is physically and mentally able to manoeuvre themselves from the floor onto a chair, they should be assisted to do so.

Ensure the manoeuvre is explained fully and clearly and is understood by all present before attempting. If space is limited and does not allow a chair to be placed safely next to the patient (e.g. in small bathroom), if the patient is able to do so, they should attempt to move themselves to an area safe to perform the above manoeuvre.

If, on attempting the above manoeuvre, the patient experiences pain, deteriorates or is unable to complete safely, they should be made comfortable on the floor and kept warm. The Ambulance Service should then be contacted via 999.

If the patient is unable to be safely assisted from the floor, or there is a suspicion they have sustained an injury, or there is a concern about their condition, the Ambulance Service should be contacted via 999 immediately. A member of staff should remain with the patient until the arrival of the ambulance.

If there is no concern identified regarding their condition/safety, an informal carer can agree to remain with them. Contact with the patient's next of kin should be made at the earliest opportunity to inform them of incident. The incident should be documented and reported using the incident reporting process. Service users & their carers need to be made aware that the risk of falling cannot be completely eliminated despite preventative measures taken.

This should be done in a sensitive manner giving reasoning behind all planned treatment & care. Manual handling techniques that can be used to aid a patient who has fallen form part of the mandatory manual handling training programme.