Were you ever told to sit up straight? Bend from your knees! While we may have shrugged those simple phrases off at some time in our life, they are really important to our health and safety. Nurses and Patient Care Technicians must utilize evidence based safe patient handling techniques and equipment to prevent injuries. This issue of the EBNP and Research newsletter will focus on the seriousness of using correct body mechanics and equipment when we take care of our patients.

UAB is currently revamping its Safe Patient Handling and Mobility (SPHM) Program. We are using evidence based tools and resources from a variety of sources such as the American Nurses Association (ANA), National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to design our new program!

We’ve recently completed an inventory of the safe patient handling equipment on each unit. This exercise gave us rich information about how we are using or not using our current equipment. We also heard your challenges and needs, and will be working to resolve them.

As you will see from this newsletter, nursing and patient care technicians are at the highest risk of injury than any other occupation.

We are designing new education for 2016, and would welcome any of your suggestions as we redesign the program.

Hope you enjoy the newsletter!

**Special points of interest:**
- Evidence Based Practice is a key component of nursing practice.
- Safe Patient Handling and Mobility is owned by Nursing Service.
- Using the best Evidence and Quality Practices improves Patient Outcomes.

**What is a Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program?**

Safe Patient Handling and Mobility (SPHM) programs reduce the risk of injury for healthcare workers and healthcare recipients while improving the quality of care across the care continuum.

Successful SPHM programs have reduced the incidence of healthcare worker injuries by up to 95%.

The use of technology, especially lifting devices, is critical to the success of these programs.

In addition to reducing healthcare injuries, SPHM programs have many other benefits, including:
- Improved quality of care
- Improved healthcare recipient mobility
- Decrease in healthcare recipient falls and pressure ulcers
- Increase in healthcare recipient satisfaction
- Increase in healthcare worker satisfaction
- Savings due to reductions in:
  - workers’ compensation
  - healthcare recipient falls and pressure ulcers
  - employee turnover

Rates of musculoskeletal injuries from overexertion in healthcare occupations are among the highest of all U.S. industries. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that in 2011, the rate of overexertion injuries averaged across all industries was 38 per 10,000 full time workers. This statistic is on overexertion injury rate for hospital workers was twice the average (76 per 10,000).

To put this into perspective, the Bureau of Labor Statistics lists RNs sixth in a list of at-risk occupations for strains and sprains. Patient care technicians were first on that list! This is followed by occupations such as truck drivers, laborers, stock handlers and construction workers.

Most of the patient handling which occurs in health care settings is performed by nurses and patient care technicians. The most recent data available from the BLS (2010) show that within the health care industry, workers in these occupations suffered the most lost-time cases of general musculoskeletal pain (11,960) and back pain (4,700).

Other factors that are increasing the risk of healthcare injuries are 1) the rising obesity rates in the United States, 2) increasing physical demands on caregivers, and 3) the aging of the workforce with the average age of a registered nurse in the U.S. is approximately 44 years.

Nursing work demands have also been strained by an ongoing shortage of nurses which is projected to reach 260,000 unfilled nursing positions by the year 2025 in the US.

There is good news here. Safe Patient Handling and Mobility programs are designed to protect nursing staff from injuries.

This year the National Public Radio (NPR) did a 4-part series on Nursing and “On the Job” injuries. With nursing being one of the most dangerous jobs in America, safe patient handling should be a top priority. More than 35,000 back and other body injuries occur each year from lifting and moving patients. Nurses and Patient Care Technicians have higher rates of back injury than construction workers.

That’s why Safe Patient Handling and Mobility is so important. Nursing needs to have the correct information on how to move and lift their patients. Nurses also need to use the equipment that helps to prevent injury.

Source: NPR’s Daniel Zwerdling
Safe Patient Handling Myths and Realities

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<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
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<td>Proper body mechanics (including the use of gait belts) prevent patient handling injuries.</td>
<td>Decades of research shows that “proper” body mechanics are not an effective way to reduce injuries. There is no such thing as safe manual lifting.</td>
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<td>SPHM technology is not affordable.</td>
<td>The benefits of SPHM include a rapid return-on-investment; savings associated with reduced healthcare worker and healthcare recipient injuries far outweigh the costs.</td>
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<td>Smaller, lighter healthcare recipients do not warrant use of SPHM technology.</td>
<td>ANA recommends policies and practices that lead to the elimination of all manual lifting. NIOSH recommends lifting no more than 35 pounds, under the best ergonomic conditions.</td>
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<td>Healthcare workers who are physically fit are less likely to be injured.</td>
<td>Research does not support this. Good health and strength may actually put healthcare workers at increased risk because their peers are much more likely to seek their assistance when manually lifting healthcare recipients.</td>
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<td>It’s much faster to manually move healthcare recipients than to take the time to get SPHM technology.</td>
<td>If SPHM technology is located conveniently, accessing it will not take a long time. It is often more time consuming to round up a team of colleagues to manually lift a healthcare recipient than it is to get the SPHM technology.</td>
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<td>Manual lifting is safer and more comfortable for healthcare recipients.</td>
<td>It is the role of the healthcare workers to teach and explain that the use of the technology is safer and more convenient for both healthcare recipients and healthcare workers.</td>
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<td>The majority of the time, manually lifting or transferring health care recipients does not result in injury.</td>
<td>Manual lifting results in microinjuries to the spine. Although the healthcare worker may not feel the effects immediately, cumulative micro-injuries can result in a debilitating injury.</td>
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<td>Using SPHM technology feels impersonal.</td>
<td>Safety and quality of care are the goals. Healthcare workers can effectively use SPHM technology while incorporating the professional values of respect, dignity, and caring.</td>
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**Ergo...what??**

Ergonomics is the science and practice of designing jobs or workplaces to match the capabilities and limitations of the human body. Ergonomics leads to 1) safer jobs with fewer injuries; 2) increased efficiency and productivity; 3) improved quality and fewer errors; and 4) improved moral.

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*Source: ANA*
Have you seen Me Lately?

Remember NIOSH recommends lifting no more than 35 pounds, under the best ergonomic conditions.

Equipment: top left is Sara Steady, bottom is Sara 3000 and top right is Maxi Move.

Don’t forget to use slides to pull patients up in bed.