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Defining Dignity for Plus-Sized Patients

Problem Solving: A Change of Equipment Significantly Improved a Patient's Ability to Mobilise and Reduced Fatigue

- **Independent mobility restored**
- **Skin issues resolved**
- **Physical and mental health improved**

Introduction

Chris* (age 38) was admitted to hospital following a fall. His weight on admission was 168kg and his past medical history included:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Previous shortness of breath, requiring non-invasive ventilation

He was mobile prior to admission for short distances, and could mobilise unaided around his home. Following the fall, he was immobile.

When Chris was assessed for new bariatric equipment, he had non-blanching red areas of skin on his sacrum and buttocks. Although his skin was intact, he was at high risk of pressure ulcers and other damage due to immobility and initially being bedbound.

**Chris is not the patient's real name*

Clinical Challenges

For the first two months of Chris' hospital admission, he was nursed on one of the Trust's bariatric beds. He could reposition himself on the bed, with some help from staff. However, he found this difficult, and was becoming fatigued quickly.

When Chris did start to mobilise, he couldn't get back into the bed because it was too high; and when he was mobilising from it, he couldn't get his feet flat on the floor. There were several challenges as a result of this:

- Mobilising without feet flat on the floor is not safe, and can increase the risk of falling.[1]
- Unsafe mobilisation was increasing moving and handling risks to staff.
- Chris had to be hoisted back into bed, purely because the bed was too high. This was hindering mobilisation and impeding his recovery.

In addition, a static bariatric chair was provided for Chris to sit on, but it wasn't deep enough for him, and he found it uncomfortable. Because of this, he was getting tired quickly after sitting out of bed, and could only stay in the chair for short periods. The resulting excessive time in bed was increasing the risk of further deconditioning.

Chris' skin was red and non-blanching in several areas, and at risk of deterioration and breakdown. The risk was increased by the unsuitable chair and difficulties he was experiencing when trying to reposition in bed.

Chris should have been weighed regularly, but this hadn't happened because there were no suitable scales available.

Patient Objectives

- **Support Chris to sit to stand, and then mobilise.**
- **Increase mobilisation, and the length of time spent out of bed.**
- **Prevent further skin deterioration and breakdown.**
- **Obtain accurate weights.**

Introduction of Medstrom's Bariatric Equipment Package

Medstrom's Clinical Advisor was asked to assess Chris, to see if a better equipment solution was available for him. Based on their conversation, and in conjunction with the ward clinical staff, the following equipment was provided:

Versatech 1100 Bed: This bed has an excellent low platform height of 21cm. It was low enough for Chris to mobilise both out of and back into safely, with his feet flat on the floor.

The hoist was no longer needed to get Chris back to bed, which benefitted him both physically and psychologically. In addition, moving and handling risks were reduced.

He used one of the split side rails on the bed as a handle when mobilising, which helped him to stand and sit more easily.

The bed has a built-in Class III weighing scale, so accurate weight monitoring was able to commence and continue.

TurnCair 1000 Low Air Loss Surface: This provides a high specification of support surface for pressure redistribution, plus a TurnAssist feature that enables safe and dignified handling of patients.

The surface was put into turning mode at night, and during the day if Chris needed it when he was tired. This helped to reduce Chris' fatigue and decrease moving and handling risks for staff.

Riser Recliner Chair: This chair has a waterfall backrest, for improved comfort and support.

The bottom cushion on the backrest can be removed completely if required. This adds depth to the seat, and allows better weight distribution if a patient has a larger gluteal shelf.

The increased seat depth was much more comfortable for Chris, and the ability to move the backrest and leg sections electrically meant that he could stay comfortable and out of bed for longer. The electric rise assisted him to stand.

At the time of writing this case study, Chris was still in hospital but making good progress. He could mobilise independently to and from his bed, and to his chair and the bathroom. The red, non-blanching areas of skin had resolved, and he had no new skin damage.

He was much less tired and feeling a lot better both physically and mentally. He could be weighed easily, regularly and with dignity when required, to help with his recovery. All objectives for him had been met.

Chris commented to Medstrom's Clinical Advisor:

> "I love this bed! It's helped me to get in and out of bed on my own again, which has made me **feel much better.** My chair is really comfy too, so I'm **enjoying sitting out** of bed now."

Summary

This case study clearly demonstrates the importance of using the right equipment at the right time. Chris started to benefit straight away once his new equipment had been provided. He was able to mobilise safely, sit out of bed for longer and start to build his strength back up.

As well as a physical improvement, Chris felt a lot better in himself. The longer a patient who is able to weight bear is hoisted, simply because the bed is too high, the more likely they are to lose their ability to stand. Chris was worried about this, and relieved when he was able to start standing and mobilising again.

The ward manager in charge of Chris' care commented:

> "It's absolutely fantastic to see Chris now able to **get out of bed and walk** to the bathroom and back **independently.** His progress, since having the new equipment, has been excellent."

Mobility regained

Skin intact

Fatigue reduced

References

1. Martindale D (2021). Calculating bed height for hospital patients using popliteal measurement. Nursing Times [online]; 117:10

To discover more about Medstrom's range of solutions for dignified plus-size patient care and enhanced support for caregivers, contact Medstrom's Bariatric Product Specialists 24/7/365 on:

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