

Title: Fall Risk Prevention in Postpartum Patients

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Purpose and Rationale: Falls in hospitalized patients of all ages are recognized as an important patient safety issue. Obstetrical patients, many of whom received epidural analgesia, can be at high risk for falls. The Hartford Hospital fall risk assessment/intervention protocol (2011) does not adequately assess the obstetrical postpartum (OB PP) patient. This study will evaluate the OB PP patients' ability to safely ambulate using Dionne's EGRESS test (DET). The DET will be put into effect as a standard practice for eligible postpartum patients at Hartford Hospital beginning July 5th 2011.

Research Question: Will the use of Dionne's EGRESS test reduce the number of falls in Postpartum patients?

Synthesis of Review of Literature: A literature search using the CINAHL database from 1982 to the present, yielded limited research that addressed falls in obstetrical patients. The search results found Dionne's EGRESS test (Dionne, 2004), which was developed to address falls in bariatric patients, and a postepidural fall risk assessment score (PEFRAS) to address OB falls after epidurals (Frank, Lane, and Hokanson 2009). Neither tool had been validated for use within the obstetric community. A chart review of 42 OB PP patient falls from 2004 to 2010 showed that 57% were due to legs giving out or buckling, 19% were due to fainting or feeling dizzy, 10% were due to slipping or tripping, and 14% were of unknown causes. Of the reported falls, 64% were due to patients trying to get to the bathroom, both with and without assistance. To date, there has not been a standardized tool to assess the patients' ability to ambulate post-delivery.

Methods/Procedures: This study will utilize a retrospective design, using data collected from all obstetrical postpartum patients meeting criteria. All RNs and LPN's caring for OB PP patients will be educated on how to perform the DET prior to patients ambulating for the first time. If the patient does not successfully pass the Dionne's EGRESS test, it will be repeated hourly until successfully completed. Results of the DET will be documented in the patient's electronic chart.

Results:

The study will take place over a 24-month period or until data indicates that the DET has successfully prevented OB PP patient falls for a 12 month period. It is hypothesized that postpartum patients having undergone the DET will experience a clinically significant reduction in falls (n=5 falls/year) vs. the average of 7.

Discussion/Application to Practice:

This study embodies the philosophy and core values of Hartford Hospital. Its results would significantly impact the safety of patients at Hartford Hospital and have widespread application. The success of this study will promote Hartford Hospital as a leader in the patient safety arena, promote further research, heightened the awareness of OB PP fall prevention, and improve the patient experience.

References:

- Dionne, M. (2004). Nurses protected by the Egress Test™ Bariatric Patients-protect them and yourself. *Bariatric Today*, 1(1), 22-25.
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