

A Brief Look at Risk Management / Safety in the Home Care Environment

Safety is freedom from danger, risk or injury. Risk management is what we do to keep ourselves safe. We work together as a team to keep our patients and ourselves as employees safe. We work safely and attend safety training classes when offered.

Agency staff should assess the patient's home for anything that could be a hazard to the patient such as poor lighting, frayed carpets, uneven floors, etc. Since about one-third of patients fall in their homes, be especially alert for hazards that might increase the risk for falls such as:

- Stairs that are cluttered, ill repaired and have no railings;
- Poor lighting;
- Electrical cords that are stretched across areas where the patient walks;
- Poor fitting shoes; and,
- Narrow, uneven or cluttered surfaces.

Another potential hazard in the home care environment is fire and/or a poor response to it by the patient or employee. The first step in avoiding a fire in the home is to assess the environment. Be aware of the hazards such as those related to using medical equipment and oxygen, smoking in bed and having a cluttered environment. Be ready to respond by making sure smoke detectors work, knowing where the exits are and how to reach one fast and how to reach the fire department.

All occurrences such as accidents and injuries that result in injury to a patient or Agency staff must be documented on an Incident/ Occurrence Report. Samples of these include but are not limited to:

- Patient falls while staff is present (attended falls);
- If a patient falls when an employee is not there, this is an unattended fall and can be put on the progress note. If the physician is contacted and there is a significant change in the patient's condition, then an Incident/ Occurrence Report must be completed.
- Medication errors;
- Equipment malfunction;
- Motor vehicle accidents while on agency business; and,
- Staff injury while on the job.

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Quiz

Employee: _____ Date: _____

Graded By (RN): _____ Grade: _____

1. It is not important for me to attend in-services on Safety in the home care environment because I practice these things in my own home.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. Hazards that could lead to falls include frayed carpets, clutter and poor fitting shoes.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. In the event of a fire I should know where the nearest exit is and how to reach the fire department.
 - a) True
 - b) False
4. All patient falls should be documented.
 - a) True
 - b) False