



Manitoba Health supports reporting and learning from patient safety events. The focus of a patient safety review is to closely look at the health care system that surrounds and interacts with those giving and receiving care. The goal is to identify risks to patient safety and recommend the most effective ways to minimize risk and improve the delivery of healthcare.

Patient Safety Learning Advisory

Fall with Fracture

Summary:

A patient on a medical unit who was considered a low risk for falls, tried numerous times to call for assistance utilizing his/her call bell. The call bell system did not engage to notify staff. The patient had fallen and sustained a fractured left hip requiring surgical intervention. The facility was in the process of replacing a faulty call bell system.

Keywords: Fall with fracture, malfunctioning call bell.

This review is based on a single event.

Findings of the Review:

The patient had an exacerbation of a pre-existing lung condition and a recent myocardial infarction and was receiving oxygen. The patient tried using his/her call bell several times for assistance. The patient proceeded to get up on his/her own with the aid of a walker. He/she fell and sustained a fractured hip. It was unknown at the time of the event that the call bell was not engaging.

The medical unit had a temporary call bell system in place while the faulty permanent call bell system was being replaced. There were many identified issues with the temporary call bell system contributing to patient safety concerns i.e.) no indication when the battery was low/batteries died; no notification of which call bell/room was ringing unless staff were at the nurses' station to visualize on a screen; sometimes the call bell would not work if a patients room door was closed; the call bell numbers were not always coordinated with patient room numbers causing confusion, especially if multiple call bells were ringing and staff answered one, all the alarms would erase.

System Learning:

Communicate to all maintenance managers that a safety review should be done prior to implementing a temporary call bell system when needed to ensure maintenance and nursing staff are aware and understanding of potential limitations of temporary system (i.e. Placement of screen for proper visualization, routine battery checks, coordinating call bell numbers with rooms, etc).