



Patient Falls

primary contact: Joanne Empoliti, Clinical Nursing Services staff member

Q. What is the purpose of this Joint Commission standard?

A. To reduce the risk of patient harm resulting from falls, including the assessment of falling risk associated with medication. The program includes the implementation and evaluation of a fall reduction program.

Q. What are the MGH policies and procedures on patient falls?

A. There are several policies and standards related to patient falls. The nursing assessment form identifies specific triggers for those patients to be considered at risk for falls and includes cognitive assessment. The Patient Care Flow Sheet includes the Morse Fall Scale, which should be completed upon admission to the inpatient unit, every 24 hours and when the patient condition changes. Interventions are identified based on the patient's risk factors for injury. The online Problem/Outcome/Intervention sheet and Clinical Pathways for managing patients with delirium, dementia and alcohol withdrawal are also available.

Q. How does the MGH demonstrate its compliance with Joint Commission requirements on patient falls?

A. The Existing Fall Prevention Program is evaluated to include current standards, practice and related policies and guidelines. Falls that occur within the MGH are reported through the hospital's safety reporting system. The Patient Care Services Quality Program receives copies of each fall-related incident report and a follow-up form. Detailed information is collected regarding the patient and the fall. This information is entered into a database and analyzed for specific quality indicators related to the fall, such as fall location, day and time, type of fall, activity at the time of fall, risk factors and resultant injuries. Unit fall data is provided to each unit's leadership team for review. This is then reviewed with the unit staff.

Q. Who is responsible for ensuring that the MGH is compliant with Joint Commission requirements?

A. The hospital administrators and clinical leaders are responsible for ensuring that the policies are consistent with the Joint Commission standards. All clinicians who have contact with patients are responsible for knowing the policies and procedures.

Q. How will the Joint Commission review the MGH's compliance on the subject?

A. Using the tracer methodology, surveyors may ask employees to identify practices and strategies that are in place to minimize harm from falls. The Joint Commission surveyor will look for evidence that fall reduction assessments have been done and that appropriate action has been taken to reduce risk of harm from falls. This may be done by: staff interview, patient interview, observation of patient care, documentation review in the medical record or review of data of patient slips and falls.

Q. How will the Joint Commission's review of the MGH's compliance on this subject affect the typical MGH employee?

A. If an employee is asked about the MGH Fall Reduction Program, he or she should know about the relevant policies, standards and practices.

Q. Where can employees find more information on the subject?

A. Employees can go online and access the Clinical Policy and Procedure Manual, the Nursing Policy Manual, Problem/Outcome/Intervention