



First Steps: Stepping Towards Recovery for Bed-Bound Patients

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Abstract: *Ambulation is crucial as it sets the path to recovery. It is about setting the patient to become more independent. It helps to prevent post-operative / procedure and bed bound complications and has large range of benefits for the patients - stimulates circulation, promotes flow of oxygen throughout the body, helps to maintain normal breathing function, prevents formation of blood clots, increases muscle tone & strength, aids in joint flexibility, relieves constipation, and improves self esteem. Group Director Nursing of Apollo Hospitals Group, has developed a campaign titled “first steps” to celebrate the moment when the patient start ambulation after a long duration of being bed bound due to a surgery/ procedure/ prolonged hospitalization. This campaign was conducted in all Apollo units across the country .In the campaign the units made a beautiful First step corner in the corridors and labeled the area as “The Steps Corner” & decorated it with quotes or tagline to motivate & cheer the patients. When the patient is ambulated, the nurse must walk along till this area slowly and progressively based on the patient’s condition – target this as a mile stone when they are able to walk till there. The patients were made to write something on the board/ pin their comments every day and let it be there for a long while to motivate the other patients. The units which decorate the “First Steps” corner most creatively & records maximum number of tender loving care moments related to first steps was awarded at the end of the month.*

Keywords: Ambulation, Bed bound patients, Bedridden patients, First step, Steps corner.

Introduction

“Let’s come together to leave foot prints of care in the hearts of our patients”

According to hospital literature, between 15 and 59% of patients lose their ability to independently ambulate while they are in the hospital. Functional decline, or the loss of ability to carry out daily tasks, has been identified as one of the worst consequences of hospitalisation. Two of the most foreseeable causes of loss of independent ambulation in hospitalized patients are insufficient ambulation and the conditioning effects of bed rest¹.

Ambulation is crucial as it sets the path to recovery. It is about setting the patient to become more independent. It helps to prevent post-operative / procedure and bed bound complications and has large range of benefits for the patients – stimulates circulation, promotes flow of oxygen throughout the body, helps to maintain normal breathing function, prevents formation of blood clots, increases muscle tone & strength, aids in joint flexibility, relieves constipation, and improves self esteem.



Nurses are best suited to encouraging patients to walk in a hospital setting. Group Director Nursing of Apollo Hospitals Group, has developed a campaign called “first steps” to celebrate the patient who starts ambulation after a long duration of being bed bound due to a surgery/ procedure/ prolonged hospitalization¹.

II. Methodology

The staffs were sensitized to the importance of “first steps” as it is a key milestone for the patient, a big moment for the family and an important task for the staff in their care routine. The staff must be there at the patient’s side as they take the first step to recovery .Through this campaign, the staff should step along an extra mile for these patients, give them our care & attention and celebrate their joyous moments.

Responsibility of the staff nurses before ambulation:

- The staff should ensure the doctor’s orders for ambulation –timing & frequency.
- For every ambulation, the staff document how much the patient walked (distance covered) and time for which patient was ambulated and the patient’s condition during ambulation.
- Recorded patient’s progress –in terms of how much the patient is able to walk each day and how he progresses from walking with support to walking without support.
- Provides health education to the patient and family regarding the following :
- The importance of ambulating and how it helps to prevent complications.
- Initially, they may feel dizzy while getting up. They should not stand up immediately. They should sit on the bed for a few minutes before getting up. They may feel dizzy, nauseous, or short of breath while walking.
- Educate them about the use of walkers/sticks/other assistive devices in consultation with a physiotherapist.

III. Campaign Activities

- A tool kit was created with the activity details to help the unit to execute the campaign successfully.
- A beautiful First step corner is created in the corridors of all applicable units.
- “The Steps Corner” was labeled and decorated with motivational quotes to cheer the patient.
- The patient is ambulated till the step corner slowly and progressively based on the patient's condition.
- The step corner is targeted as a mile stone when they are able to walk till there.
- The patient is made to write something on the board/ pin their comments every day and it was there for a long time to motivate the other patients.
- The family members were informed prior to be present during the first step moment to celebrate with the patient.
- The first step moment of the patient was captured as pictures and videos with patient and family consent.
- The unit which decorates the “First Steps” corner most creatively & records the maximum number of tender loving care moments related to first steps was awarded at the end of the month.
- The first step campaign was highly appreciated by the patients, family members and consultants .The units are encouraged to sustain the campaign activity to create a pleasant experience for the patients .



Fig.1: The decorated step.



Fig.2: Patients writing their comments.



IV. Conclusion

This campaign was a thoughtful endeavor. We should empathize with the patients who have been bed bound for a long time and have been longing to take their “first steps”. We are all so joyful to seeing the first steps of a baby, but we often forget the joy of patients taking their first steps. Through this campaign, we stepped an extra mile for these patients and gave them our care & attention and celebrated their joyous moments.

References

[1] Barbara Doherty-Kinga and Barbara J. Bowersb, International Journal of Nursing studies 2013 Sep; 50(9): 1240–1246.Doi: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2013.02.007.