

Safe Patient Handling - Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice

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Abstract: Bridging the gap between research and practice is a challenging endeavor, particularly in the healthcare industry. Translating research findings into clinically meaningful evidence is important so that caregivers can apply these findings while caring for a variety of patients without injuring themselves. However, feedback from practitioners in terms of (lack of) relevance of research findings to their practice is crucial and should be reciprocal as evidenced-based practice is utmost important for both caregiver and patient safety. For example, we often come across the following question in manual patient handling, "What is the patient weight that can be safely lifted without using assistive devices?" To this effect, utilizing revised National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Lifting Equation, it was suggested that "under the assumption of an otherwise "ideal" patient handling situation," the maximum recommended weight limit is 35 lbs. Although this weight limit is not a NIOSH policy per se, it has certainly generated lots of debates and discussions in the healthcare industry in terms of what is 'ideal' as well as what is 'safe' for a caregiver in a variety of patient handling situations. Similarly, it is often suggested that to boost or reposition a patient in the bed, instead of a drawsheet, it is advisable to use friction reducing sheet (also known as a Slide Sheet or Slip sheet). Although these sheets are less expensive and easy to use, the maximum weight limit for safe patient transfer with this repositioning devices is still inconclusive. Using a variety of such patient handling examples, this presentation will address various challenges in closing the gap between research and practice in the healthcare industry.

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