Ergonomic Safety

Take care of yourself so that you can take care of others
What is Ergonomics?

“An applied science concerned with designing and arranging things people use so that the people and things interact most efficiently and safely”

(Merriam-Webster, 2019)
Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

- MSDs affect varied parts of the body, such as muscles, ligaments, tendons, soft tissue and nerves.

- Occupations, such as healthcare, pose a risk for MSD injury from repetitive tasks where proper body mechanics is not utilized. These include:
  - Heavy lifting
  - Bending
  - Reaching overhead
  - Pushing and pulling heavy loads

(OSHA, 2019)
MSD Symptoms

- How to know if you have a possible MSD
  - Common symptoms include:
    - Pain
    - Stiffness
    - Swelling
    - Numbness
    - Tingling

(CDC, 2012)
MSDs Examples

Examples of workplace MSDs include:
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tendinitis
- Muscle strains
- Low back injuries
- Rotator cuff (shoulder) injuries
- Epicondylitis (elbow) injuries

(OSHA, 2019)
Risk Factors for Injury

- Force - The amount of physical exertion needed to perform a task
- Repetition - Performing a task or movement for a sustained amount of time, continuously
- Awkward positioning - Positioning and twisting in such a way that produces undue strain and stress on the body

(OSHA, 2019)
Greatest Risk Factor

- The single greatest risk factor for sustaining MSDs among healthcare workers involves manual patient handling.
  - This includes manual lifting, transferring, and repositioning of patients

(CDC, 2019)
How do MSDs affect the workplace?

- The most common cause for lost or restricted work time comes from MSDs injuries.
- More than 33% of employee illness and work related injuries have been reported annually.
  - Creates staffing challenges
  - Accounts for increase cost to employer
- Leading reason for nursing personnel to leave their job (OSHA, 2019)
Implementing Ergonomics

• Implementing ergonomics in the workplace reduces risk for MSDs. Elements to include:
  – Assess and identify problems
  – Develop policies and provide adequate training
  – Encourage early symptom reporting
  – Come up with solutions to hazards
  – Provide ergonomic assistive devices, as needed
  – Evaluate ergonomic process often

(CDC, 2012; OSHA, 2019)
Safe Patient Handling (SPH)

• Just one bad lift of a patient can change a nurse’s career and life.

• Healthcare facilities have instituted policies that include assistive devices for prevention of injuries from poor patient handling and improper body mechanics.
  – Goal is to establish a safe working environment for nurses and eliminate manual patient handling

(ANA, 2019)
Instituting Safe Patient Handling

- Assistive Devices
  - Draw Sheets
  - Hoyer Lifts
  - Gait Belts
  - Slide boards
  - Stand assist devices
  - Adjustable beds

(Registered Nursing, 2019)
Proper Body Mechanics

• Utilizing proper body mechanics can reduce the risk for bodily injury and strain. Such as:
  – Bend from your hips and knees; NOT your back
  – Keep objects close to your center body core
  – Keep spine, neck and back in alignment. NO twisting.
  – Maintain a wide and secure stance of support
  – Wear slid resistant shoes
  – Don’t reach overhead, use a step stool as needed

(Registered Nursing, 2019)
Injury Prevention

Strategies to prevent patient handling injuries

1. Use assistive equipment as a nursing practice standard
2. Know your facility’s safe patient handling policy and equipment
3. Check equipment for battery status before shift
4. Utilize proper body mechanics
5. Don’t underestimate a patient care task involving physical assistance

(Hawkins, 2016)
Ergonomic Considerations

- Protect your body from injury and MSDs
- Be aware of facility policies regarding ergonomics in the workplace
- Always use Safe Patient Handling protocols
- Be aware of proper body mechanics
- NEVER lift or transfer a patient alone!
  - Ask for help
- Report any suspected injuries immediately
References


References continued