NEUROGYMTECH

Functional Incontinence: Addressing the Causative Factors

Resident incontinence represents a major challenge for the Long Term Care (LTC) industry. It negatively impacts the residents themselves on many levels and has a significant economic impact on the service provider both in terms of the support care required and direct expense costs.

At a Revera Living Conference (Cambridge, ON 2008), Anne Earthy gave an illuminating presentation on the advantages of routine toileting (Enhanced Continence Care – The Advantages of Routine Toileting). The findings made it clear that a resident's morale is directly associated with maintaining a 'normal' toileting pattern in a sitting position. Likewise, working with continent residents improved the service providers' morale, reduced the number of injuries among staff and resulted in direct savings for the facility. The cost savings described by Ms. Earthy on continence products, medications, and linens amounted to over $30,000/year for a 75 bed home.

Encouraging normal voiding patterns is clearly essential for improved continence, but there are other ways a facility can help encourage more residents to maintain and even regain the ability to self-toilet. Treatment of functional incontinence depends on the successful management of causative or contributing conditions. Several key physical factors including: mobility, transfer ability, strength, and flexibility are essential for independent toileting. Targeting these abilities for improvement, then, is crucial in any effort to increase the number of individuals who can self-toilet.

NeuroGym Technologies Inc. manufactures innovative mobility training tools that provide LTC facilities with the capacity to effectively improve residents' ability to sit, stand, transfer, and walk. A key by-product of improved standing and mobility is the ability to manage toileting more independently. The NeuroGym Sit-to-Stand Trainer, for example, is designed to help residents who cannot stand, regain the ability to stand independently. Actively assisting the standing motion with support at the knee, trunk and arms to promote early mobility, the Sit-to-Stand Trainer uses a counter-weight mechanism to provide a safe and effective way to strengthen weight-bearing muscles and increase standing stability and endurance. Unlike other tools that lift people to, or maintain them in a standing position, this equipment enables a resident to success-fully initiate the motion of standing up, even with weakened or seemingly unsuccessful efforts. Through regular training (typically a few minutes 3-4 times per week) and gradually reducing the counter-weight, a resident can re-learn the standing up skill and redevelop the strength and confidence necessary to do so more independently.

For residents who are able to stand but lack the strength, balance, and confidence to walk, the NeuroGym Bungee Mobility Trainer is a versatile body-weight support tool that enables safe motor retraining. It provides safe ways to practice balance, walking, and natural protective side-steps by counter-acting loss of stability with graduated support from beneath. This allows residents to safely begin to walk and work on balance skills without being held up from above by an overhead harness that doesn't allow natural responses, and hence useful practice, in loss of balance situations.

NeuroGym Technologies equipment presents new opportunities for LTC facilities to address resident mobility and self-toileting challenges. By targeting the key physical factors that play a central role in the cause and perpetuation of incontinence, LTC facilities can positively influence resident outcomes on these abilities.

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