Fall Risk Assessment in the Outpatient Setting
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PROBLEM:
Primary Care Nurses identified the Morse Fall Scale an inappropriate Fall Risk Screen in the Outpatient Setting. Nurses sought an Evidence-Based Tool that defined fall risk in non-hospitalized patients.

EVIDENCE:
The Evidence-Based Research Tool, Preventing Falls in Older Adults ‘Evidence-Based Guideline for Fall Prevention’ and ‘Assessment and Management of Falls’ by Dr. Laurence Rubenstein (with permission), was selected. The assessment follows an algorithm of nurse assessment, provider management and interventions.

The gait and balance assessment tool, the ‘Get Up and Go Test’, was modified for outpatient clinic use.

The education sheet, ‘Fall Prevention at Home’, from the National Center for Patient Safety ( NCPS) Falls Toolkit is available as a computer link or handout. It is pleasant, easy-to-read and understand.

STRATEGY:
The nurse evaluates risk for single and recurrent falls, assesses gait and balance. A positive screen alerts the provider for management.

PRACTICE CHANGE:
The nurse electronically addresses single or recurrent falls, normal or abnormal Get Up and Go Test, recent fall circumstances, patient injury and treatment, assistive devices, difficulty walking, medications, vision changes, shortness of breath and dizziness. The provider has a plan/action comment box to review/adjust medications, educate environmental modifications, history, medication, vision, gait and balance, lower limb joints, neurological and cardiovascular factors and enter consults to ancillary services as needed.

EVALUATION:
The tool was developed, tested, and implemented at Jack C. Montgomery VAMC. The tool is supported by primary care teams, efficient, user-friendly and available with minimal expense.

The information is gathered is in response to JCAHO and VA’s External Peer Review Program.

The Fall Risk Screen includes development of health factors that enable data tracking from the VA Data Warehouse.
RESULTS:
The program meets the National Patient Safety Goal for a Fall Reduction Program and has been shared with other VA Medical Centers.

FINDINGS:
The focus is to prevent falls with education, gait training and interventions including available assistive devices. The people that can be helped are those that have not yet started to fall.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Jack C. Montgomery will maintain their successful momentum in Outpatient Fall Risk Assessment and expand Evidence-Based Interventions to other VA Facilities and Outside Facilities that need an Outpatient Fall Risk Screen.