



July 28th, 2017

New initiative to further reduce risk of falls for South Tyneside hospital patients

All South Tyneside hospital patients aged 65 and over will now be assessed within 48 hours of admission for their risk of falling as part of continued quality improvement work to reduce the rate of falls.

A 53% reduction in falls leading to patient harm was recorded at South Tyneside District Hospital in the first six months of this year, compared to the same period last year.

Only last week, the hospital's success in reducing inpatient falls was highlighted in a national NHS Improvement report*.

From 1 August, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust will roll out a new 'falls prevention assessment and individualised care plan' for every patient aged 65 and over who is admitted to hospital, to ensure all staff are aware of their specific risks of a fall.

The quality improvement work at the trust has been led by a multi-disciplinary team involving doctors, nurses, falls specialists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and continence and delirium experts. Between 9am to 4pm on Tuesday 1 August, members of the team will be available to talk to visitors, patients and staff about preventing falls at a stand in the hospital's Ingham Wing.

Next week's launch coincides with the trust's new intake of junior doctors to ensure the new process is embedded with new trainee medical staff.

Falls in hospital are the most commonly reported patient safety incident in the NHS. Some result in serious injuries, such as hip fracture and head injuries, which can result in death. Minor injuries from a fall can affect a patient's physical function, resulting in reduced mobility and undermining their confidence and independence.

All falls, even those that do not result in injury, cause significant distress and anxiety for the patient and their family. Falls are also costly to the NHS as they increase length of hospital stay and can be associated with additional care costs on discharge.

Consultant Geriatrician Dr Suba Thirugnanasothy, who is South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's falls lead, said: "Throughout our hospital we care for many frail, older people who are generally at higher risk of a fall and this new initiative will, without doubt, help support our staff to further improve on the great strides we have already made to reduce falls."



“Tackling the problem of inpatient falls in hospital is very challenging and whilst there are no single or easily defined actions which, when done on their own, are shown to reduce falls, research has shown that multiple interventions from a multi-disciplinary team, tailored to the individual patient, can reduce falls by 20%–30%.

“These interventions are particularly important for patients with dementia or delirium, who are at high risk of falling in hospital. Our aim is to ensure that all inpatients aged 65 and over are appropriately assessed for their risks of falling and that a care plan is produced which is tailored to their individual needs.”

The trust’s new risk assessment covers delirium, continence, mobility, vision, lying and standing blood pressure checks and medication. Its launch is the latest step for South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust in reducing falls.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid said: “Improving patient safety and outcomes is our constant aim and the success we have had so far in reducing inpatient falls is very encouraging. We are determined to improve even further and the new rigorous assessment and related interventions will help us to do that.”

The trust was one of only 19 in England selected to take part in NHS Improvement’s (NHSI) 90-day falls collaborative earlier this year, with a view to reducing the rate of falls in their hospitals and sharing examples of best practice and innovation which could be replicated across the NHS.

Before being given the opportunity to join the collaborative, the trust had already identified falls as a top priority and improvement work had begun. This included increased training for medical and nursing staff, renewed emphasis on medical staff reviewing medications known to increase the risk of falling in older adults, and the appointment of a falls specialist nurse.

Link nurses for falls have also been identified on every ward. The falls specialist nurse meets with them and gives monthly updates to the trust’s falls operational group, which ensures that improvements and learning are shared throughout the organisation. In addition, new starters in the trust at all levels receive some falls training as part of the staff induction programme.

ENDS

Pictured above: Consultant Geriatrician and Falls Lead for South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Dr Suba Thirugnanasothy, right, with Falls Specialist Nurse Catherine Peel South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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Notes to editors

- To tie in with the launch of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s new ‘falls prevention assessment and individualised care plan’, members of the team will be available to talk to visitors, patients and staff about preventing falls on Tuesday, 1 August, at a stand in South Tyneside District Hospital’s Ingham Wing, 9am to 4pm
- South Tyneside’s involvement in NHS Improvement’s falls collaborative will be the topic for the Foundation Trust’s Medicine for Members event on Tuesday, 12 September, 2.30pm, in the South Tyneside District Hospital Lecture Theatre, Education Centre, Harton Lane, South Shields, NE34 0PL. Tea and coffee will be served from 2pm. The event, which is open solely to members of the Foundation Trust, is free. As spaces are limited, please contact the Membership Office for a ticket. If you are not a member, it is easy to join, simply visit the website at www.stft.nhs.uk or contact the Membership Office on 0191 2024121.
- * NHS Improvement has published a report showing how much falls in hospitals cost the NHS. They estimate that the total cost of reported inpatient falls for 2015/16 was £630 million. The report also found that:



- In 2015/16 more than 250,000 falls were reported across acute, mental health and community hospital settings
- 77% of all reported inpatient falls happen to patients over the age of 65
- The estimated overall cost of £630 million equates to approximately 25% of the £2.3 billion total costs of falls estimated by NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- Older patients are both more likely to fall and more likely to suffer harm. Falls among this group also have a disproportionate impact on costs: they account for 77% of total falls and represent around 87% of total costs
- If inpatients falls are reduced by as much as 25-30% this could result in an annual saving of up to £170 million