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Gaylord Hospital Safe Patient Handling Program Significantly Reduces Injury, Costs

WALLINGFORD, CT (November 2, 2009) – Based on national statistics, work-related injuries among hospital staff, specifically back injuries, are one of the nation's largest costs in patient care handling and a major financial drain on a hospital's bottom line. Gaylord Hospital has embarked on a Safe Patient Handling program that provides caregivers with the tools they need to prevent further accidents and injury. Since its implementation, this program has reduced patient handling costs to Gaylord by more than 90%.

Since the program's first full year in 2006 the total costs due to back injury has decreased from over \$200,000 to just \$66,000 a year– a savings of over \$134,000 a year. The cost per day has decreased from over \$1,100 per day to \$182.00 per day. The number of claims due to injury has also been reduced by nearly 30%.

Gaylord Hospital is unique in its Safe Patient Handling policy in Connecticut. Most hospitals institute a "Don't Lift" policy emphasizing training instead of equipment. Marje Palladino, Director of Nursing at Gaylord Hospital and a Board Director of Region One for the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses, spearheads the Gaylord Safe Patient Handling team that includes representatives from Facilities, and Therapy Services. According to Palladino

both training and equipment are important. The healthcare personnel at Gaylord are taught correct lifting techniques in combination with using lift equipment and assistive devices.

“Safety is our number one priority for our patients and our staff. We have implemented protocols and training procedures for the staff. Each member of our staff is held accountable for their actions with training, and retraining when needed,” says Palladino. “In past years we concentrated specifically on lifting the patients correctly; now we have changed direction to include the safe positioning of patients using aids such as a slide sheet.”

Patients and their families are also an integral part of the process. Each patient is evaluated upon admittance to determine what help they will need when being moved. Information is given to the patient and family members as a guide and handy reference. Rules and guidelines are posted on the wall of each room as a daily reminder of what to do when lifting a patient.

To further ensure that proper steps are taken, and to guarantee that the staff is aware of the needs of each patient, special signs with “helping hands” are posted on the doors of patients that need extra attention when transferring or repositioning them.

The success of the program has not gone unnoticed. Gaylord has taken on a leading role in providing training and information to other hospitals interested in using the Safe Patient Handling program. Several hospitals have signed on to learn more about the program, taking the training they are given back to institute with their own staff.

For more information on Safe Patient Handling or information on how your hospital can be included in the training, contact Marje Palladino at Gaylord Hospital mpalladino@gaylord.org or (203) 284-2100 ext. 2101.

Gaylord Hospital is a not-for-profit, long-term acute care hospital based in Wallingford, CT. The hospital specializes in the care and treatment of people with complex medical and rehabilitation needs, outpatient services and sleep medicine. Visit www.gaylord.org or call (203) 284-2829 for more information.

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