BREAKING NO BACKS: Reducing Caregiver Injury Risks

As America’s patient populations are aging and becoming more obese, the occupational risks for caregivers are greater than ever. Poor patient handling practices put strain on caregivers and also put patient safety at risk. How can we help caregivers—and patients—safely get the most from their interactions?

A peer-reviewed study by Guy Fragala Ph.D., PE, CSP, CSPHP, sponsored by Midmark, evaluated perceived exertion by caregivers. Experienced caregivers performed two tasks: assisting a 235-pound patient with limited mobility onto a traditional fixed-height exam table and then onto a height-adjustable exam chair.

Patients without a thorough exam risk:
- Poorer quality care
- Greater risk of misdiagnoses
- Missed benefits of early detection

Height-adjustable exam chair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional fixed-height exam table (similar to those found in most clinics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19% less exertion on shoulders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40% less exertion on upper back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29% less exertion on lower back</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Midmark study participants indicated their exam tables were too high for a patient.

Caregivers rated their exertion levels after both activities.

Reducing Caregiver Injury Risks

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For more information, read the study overview at midmark.com.

Sources:
2 Disability statistic: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html

The exam table is the central and most important furnishing in the ambulatory care clinic. This research demonstrates that using height-adjustable, accessible exam chairs can improve the environment of care by significantly reducing occupational risk to caregivers while improving quality of care for patients.

Guy Fragala, Ph.D., PE, CSP, CSPHP

Two tasks evaluated: assist patient using a height-adjustable table and a height-adjustable chair

Clinical dimensions: weight of trial patient = 235 pounds

96.75% average reduction in perceived physical exertion using a single height-adjustable exam chair

10 of 12 participants found the adjustable exam chair to be easier to use.