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 point of care interactions?

A peer-reviewed study by Guy Fragala PhD, 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.

Caregivers rated their exertion levels after both activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height-adjustable exam chair</th>
<th>Traditional fixed-height exam table (similar to those found in many clinics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less exertion on shoulders</td>
<td>less exertion on shoulders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less exertion on upper back</td>
<td>less exertion on upper back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less exertion on lower back</td>
<td>less exertion on lower back</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19% less exertion on shoulders
40% less exertion on upper back
29% less exertion on lower back

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

1 of 4 patient lifts using a fixed-height table were deemed unsafe

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

Guy Fragala, PhD, PE, CSP, CSPHP

"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."