Enhancement Of The Patient Falls Program To Reduce The Number Of Patient Falls And Falls With Injury Or Death

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IDENTIFICATION:
Quality Improvement data showed that the patient fall rate at Franklin Square Hospital Center for 2007 and 2008 was 0.22 patient falls/100 patient days. While this reflects consistent patient care practices at the hospital, the Nursing Quality and Patient Safety Council (NQPSC) determined that their goal was to continue to reduce the patient fall rate with a special emphasis on reducing the patient fall with injury rate.

PROCESS:
New evidence on patient falls revealed that the use of color-coded patient alert wristband and sock standardization served as a visual cue to staff to alert them of high-risk patients. While not a substitute for effective handoff communication between members of the nursing staff, the high alert visual cue enabled anyone passing by the room to immediately recognize that the patient was at high risk for patient falling. This included members of the hospital staff including Case Managers and Environmental Services who have high visibility on the unit.

SOLUTION:
In the winter of 2009, members of the Value Added Team (VAT) introduced a color-coded system alerting all members of the health care team of patients at high risk for a fall. Initially, the color orange was selected as the color to use on ID bracelets and socks for all patients at risk for falling. However, to be consistent with practices throughout Maryland, the color was changed to bright yellow. Representatives from the Nursing Quality and Patient Safety Council helped raise awareness of these products and continue to encourage staff throughout the hospital to use them to identify patients at risk for falls.

OUTCOMES:
The patient falls rate decreased to a low of 0.13 shortly after implementing the yellow wristbands and socks in FY 2009. Patient falls with injury decreased from 12 in 2004 to 2 in 2009. This reflects a significant reduction in falls and patient injuries.