

HEALTH & SAFETY: PALLIATIVE CARE

“Adaptive Equipment”

BQIS/Outreach Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual’s health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This is the fourth of four Fact Sheets regarding Palliative Care.

Objectives

To provide information on types, purpose, and ways that adaptive equipment may be used in providing palliative care and promote quality of life and comfort.

Definitions

Adaptive Equipment (AE) and Assistive Technology (AT) Devices: These terms are used interchangeably. These are products or devices that are used for a variety of reasons such as to improve safety, support, and comfort or to protect skin. They can be used during many Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) including: when communicating, eating, toileting, dressing, grooming, bathing, moving, transferring, or when doing leisure activities. They can also compensate for a sensory loss such as vision or hearing or to provide warning. Other devices can provide padding or support and reduce deformity. Finally, devices might be used when completing home care or job related tasks.

Positioning Devices: Devices that assist or support the person’s body or parts of their body, are comfortable, and prevent skin breakdown.

Palliative care: The active, all-encompassing care of people that prevents and provides relief from pain, suffering and discomfort; and maximizes quality of life.

Facts

- The use of adaptive equipment and positioning devices may play an important role in providing comfort and pain relief.
- Devices may be acquired commercially, modified, and/or customized.
- Some devices can be used without specialist assessment. Other devices require a specialist evaluation and recommendation.
- Some adaptive equipment that provides comfort can be purchased from a local retail store including: body pillows, neck pillows, small pillows, regular pillows, and bed risers.

- Devices which can be purchased in a health supply store include: bedrails, special foam pillows for improved pressure distribution, heel and elbow protectors, reachers, shower chairs, bedside commodes, and urinals.
- Adaptive equipment that may provide comfort and pain relief but require specialist evaluation include:
 - special wheelchairs and seating
 - mechanical lift and lift sling
 - special bed cushions or mattress
- Speech Language Pathologists can evaluate for communication plans or devices that can assist person in expressing discomfort and pain
- Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists can evaluate the need for adaptive equipment, assistive devices, transfer techniques and positioning needs.

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Develop palliative plan to address what equipment will aid in minimizing pain and maximize comfort needs.
2. Seek assistance from specialists to maximize use of adaptive equipment to relieve pain and discomfort.
3. Make palliative plan available to all staff/caregivers.
4. Provide competency-based training on indicated palliative measures and use of assistive devices/equipment.
5. Provide consistent staffing as much as possible to provide consistent care, anticipate the individual's needs, and facilitate their comfort.

Learning Assessment

Questions that can be used to verify a person's competency in the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Some devices or equipment the staff can use to provide comfort by positioning or repositioning include:
 - A. Body pillows
 - B. Reachers
 - C. Wheelchairs
 - D. Bedside commodes
2. True or False: Staff do have the ability to provide comfort and support to the individual.
3. True or False: Any member of the IST (Interdisciplinary Support Team) can assess the individual for the need of adaptive equipment.
4. The entire Interdisciplinary team should be involved in developing a Health Care Plan for palliative care which should include adaptive equipment needs.

References

Ryan's Occupational Therapy Assistant Principles, Practice Issues, and Techniques, 3rd Edition
(Edited by Karen Sladyk, Sally F Ryan).

Willard & Spackman's Occupational Therapy, 10th Edition. Elizabeth Blesedell Crepeau,
Ellen S. Cohn, & Barbara A. Boyt Schell.

Related Resources

Palliative Care Series Fact Sheets: "General Considerations", "Pain Management", "Comfort
Measures"

Pain Assessment Rating Scale

Pain Management Diary

Learning Assessment Answers

1. A
2. True
3. False
4. True

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outreach@fssa.in.gov • DDRSOutreach.IN.gov

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OR-FS-HS-PN-30(12-30-09)