

JL11. Don't Fall for It! Preventing Falls in Patients with Cancer

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The Oncology Nursing Society's 2009–2013 research agenda highlights the need for greater attention to impaired physical functioning in inpatients with cancer because of the significant physical, psychological, and economic consequences. Fall prevention is an important nursing quality indicator, but fall prevention programs for hospitalized patients have had limited success. The purpose of this oncology unit-based initiative was to identify factors that place patients with cancer at greater risk for falling and to explore whether the Schmid scale is able to identify those patients at highest risk to fall or sustain an injury should they fall. A retrospective review of all falls that occurred between February 1 and September 30, 2013 provided insight into factors that might place a patient with cancer into a high risk for falls category compared to other inpatients. The two most common environmental factors that the patients who fell had in common were being tethered by IV or oxygen tubing and/or using a bedside commode. Patient factors included age, gender, disease process, treatment, and length of stay. The Schmid did not appropriately identify oncology patients at risk for falling. A total of 14 of 37 patients had low risk scores prior to their falls. Additionally, staff nurses need to have a better understanding of how to utilize the scale in a more consistent manner. Advanced practice nurses need to review data related to falls in patients hospitalized with cancer to devise and test evidence-based fall prevention strategies. They also need to educate staff nurses to improve consistency in use of screening tools.