



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Addressing latent and active failures to reduce workplace slips, trips and falls

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Introduction

Slip, trips and falls (STF) are common workplace injuries in hospitals. Based on past experiences, latent failures (such as environmental design and footwear) are normally regarded as main contributors to STF. However, after addressing these latent factors in Haven of Hope Hospital (HHH), STF incidents still contributed a significant portion of workplace injuries. After further investigation, it appears that some active failures (such as risk taking behavior) also contribute considerably to STF. Hence, a program that purposely addressed the active failures on top of the latent failures in preventing STF was organized.

Objectives

To promote staff awareness on both latent and active failures in STF and study staff perception on the contributing factors to STF in order to formulate a better STF prevention strategy.

Methodology

To promote staff awareness on STF, a staff fall prevention program had been implemented in mid-2011 to 2012. Tai Chi classes to train body balance and lower limb strength of staff and game booths to help screen of staff with fall risk were organized. Visual cues were used at staircases, edge of risers and curb to remind staff the risks of falling when climbing up or down stairs. Exhibition boards showing common causes and "black spots" of STF incidents were displayed. A slide show STF precautions was also shown in the televisions at staff canteen and lift lobbies to enhance staff awareness. Besides, a survey was conducted to understand staff perception on the contribution of latent and active failures in STF incidents.

Result

From the survey (N=144), although staff were well alert of fall risk at workplace (mean = 7.9 /10), they considered personal factors proportionally contributed more to STF when compare with environmental factors with a ratio of 6:4. Results of this study and the outcome of the Staff Fall Prevention Program suggested that in order to effectively curb STF incidents, both latent and active failures needed to be considered. After a series of fall prevention programs with particular focus on active failures, a decreasing

trend in STF incidents is observed. It reflects that fall risk specific awareness program is an effective mean to reduce STF incidents.