



Adaptive Equipment

BQIS 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 document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice. This is the fourth of four Fact Sheets regarding palliative care.

Intended Outcomes

To provide information on types, purpose, and ways that adaptive equipment may be used in providing palliative care and to promote both 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 individual's body or parts of their body that are comfortable and that prevent skin breakdown.

Palliative care: The active, all-encompassing care of people that prevents and provides relief from pain, suffering, and discomfort while maximizing their 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's evaluation and recommendation.
- Some adaptive equipment (such as those that provide 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 includes:
 - 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 an individual in expressing needs, wants, 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 a palliative plan to address what equipment will help in minimizing pain and maximizing comfort needs.
2. Seek assistance from specialists to maximize the use of adaptive equipment to relieve pain and discomfort.
3. Make the palliative plan available to all staff/caregivers.
4. Provide competency-based training on chosen 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



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FACT SHEET

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 interdisciplinary support team (IST) can assess the individual for the need of adaptive equipment.
4. True or false: The entire interdisciplinary team should be involved in developing a health care plan for palliative care which should include adaptive equipment needs.

References

Muscular Dystrophy Association. *Chapter 1: Equipment for daily living*. Retrieved 08/30/2015 from: <http://www.mda.org/publications/everyday-life-als/chapter-1>

Muscular Dystrophy Association. *Chapter 4: Mobility and support equipment*. Retrieved 08/30/2015 from: <http://www.mda.org/publications/everyday-life-als/chapter-4>

National Guideline Clearinghouse (NGC). *Guideline synthesis: Prevention of pressure ulcers*. In: National Guideline Clearinghouse (NGC) [Web site]. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2006 Dec (revised 2014 Feb). Retrieved 08/30/2015 from <http://www.guideline.gov/syntheses/printView.aspx?id=47794>

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