Considerations for Bariatric Patients in Pressure Injuries and Wound Care

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The faculty member has listed no financial interest/arrangements that would be considered a conflict of interest.

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Objectives

• Examine the factors which have an impact on skin issues of the bariatric patient
• Discuss prevention and treatment of skin injuries when caring for a bariatric patient
• Describe factors to be considered when selecting a support surface, seat cushion and/or other specialty equipment for a bariatric patient

International Guidelines
Recommendations for Organizations

1. “Provide safe, respectful care and avoid injuries to both the individual and health professional.” C

2. “Maximize workplace safety by implementing organization-wide bariatric management strategies that address manual handling techniques.” C

3. “Provide pressure redistribution support surfaces and equipment appropriate to the size and weight of the individual.” C
Basic Considerations for the Bariatric Population

- There is nothing that makes an obese person ordinary when it comes to being a patient or a resident.
- BMI is not a way to evaluate the size of a person. It is an instrument for evaluating the “at risk” status of the individual.
- Sensitivity and respect are paramount when caring for persons of size.

Skin Changes in the Bariatric Person

- Reduced tissue perfusion
- Compromise of moisture barrier
  - Trans-epidermal Water Loss (TEWL)
  - Lipid release
  - Friction
- Chronic inflammation
  - Pro-inflammatory cytokines
- Thinning of skin

Aggressive prevention is mandatory!
Prevention of Skin Injuries

• Assessment

• Proper support surface

• Skin care

• Skin injury prevention protocols

Assessments

• Skin Assessment
  – Skin Risk Assessment Tool
  – Skin folds
    • Look inside the folds…all places there is skin on skin
  – Pressure areas
    • Not just bony prominences
    • Differentiate
  – Moisture Associated Skin Damage (MASD)
    • Identify area
  – Lymphedema and Lipedema

• Nutritional Assessment
Support Surface Selection

- **Weight capability is only one factor**
  - Important that those who make purchase and rental decisions understand this.

- **Width measurement**
  - At widest point of body...standard surfaces are 32-36 in. or 81-91 cm.

- **Address pressure redistribution**
  - Active or passive
  - Cells vertical or horizontal

Selection...cont.

- **Addressing microclimate**
  - How does one remove excess moisture, control the temperature...

- **Address friction/shear**
  - What will reduce or increase friction?
  - What will reduce or increase shear?

- **Address egress and ingress**
  - Consider hi-low bed

- **Is the bed self-propelled?**
Seating

• Wheelchairs should be properly sized for patient/resident and single patient use. Sides should not bind. Adjustable parts should have proper padding to avoid any sharp edges.
• Seat cushions should be specific for patient and, properly fitted and prescribed by a professional and reevaluated at least yearly better every 6 months.

Skin Care

• Cleanse
  – Daily cleansing in all problem areas…skin folds, under breasts, perineal area and any other areas of excessive moisture
  – pH appropriate products
  – Pat dry
• Moisturize
  – Humectants or emollients or combo of both
• Protect
  – Moisture barrier crème
Skin Injury Prevention Protocols

• Assessment:
  – Skin…daily in all settings, ICU and post-op require at each shift or more often
  – Nutritional…on admission, then monitor and re-evaluate at any condition change

• Support surface:
  – Use of bariatric bed and mattress
  – Established algorithm for support surface selection, unit specific and based on individual needs

Prevention Protocols cont.

• Support surface cont.
  – Should be available on admission
  – Available in E.D., radiology, interventional radiology, pre-op, OR, post-op

• Skin Care
  – Areas of excessive moisture may need to be cleansed several times daily
  – Apply moisturizer frequently during the day
  – Use of wicking products should be used in skin folds
Prevention Protocols cont.

• Pressure Injury
  – Turning and repositioning schedule based on individual need….bed and chair. Select positioning devices with care.
  – Monitor HOB
  – Early and often mobilization
  – Consider use of a prophylactic dressing
  – Consider use of friction/shear reducing linens, bed linens and gowns
  – Monitor adequate hydration and nutrition
  – Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize

Prevention cont.

• Medical devices
  – Monitor sites frequently and address any reddened or irritated area immediately
  – Obtain bariatric trach ties, bed pans, catheters

• Tubes and tubing
  – Keep them where you can see them
Treatment Protocols

All of the preventions listed above, and…

• Turning and Positioning
  – Avoid positioning on pressure injury site(s)
  – Avoid positioning devices that create heat
  – May need to reposition and/or turn more frequently

• Dressings…pressure and other skin injury
  – Often curl when used, monitor carefully and replace as needed. Moisture may prevent adherence.
  – Skin is already fragile…avoid tape when possible

Treatment cont.

• Skin Injuries
  – MASD
  – Intertriginous dermatitis
  – Wound dehiscence
  – Skin tears

• Medical devices
  – Use bariatric appropriate size
  – Monitor sites frequently during the day
  – Reposition devices if irritation or injury occurs
Bariatric Equipment

• Safety for patient
  – Always obtain proper bariatric equipment both size and durability appropriate
  – Beds, chairs, wheelchairs, stretchers, canes, lifts, slings, transfer devices, OR tables, seating cushions…bariatric only
  – Slings must be in good condition and compatible with lift
  – Have any device brought from home checked

Bariatric Equipment

• Safety for patient and caregiver
  – Caregiver should not lift, turn or transfer a bariatric patient manually. Use of equipment is needed.
  – Equipment must be in proper working condition, inspected frequently and removed if damaged in any way.
  – Proper instructions for use of equipment should accompany equipment and in-service provided for its use.
Bariatric Equipment

- Proper equipment provides best measure of safety and care for patient as well as caregiver
- See Safe Patient Handling Guidelines for information
  - https://www.publichealth.va.gov/employeehealth/patient-handling/

***Documentation***

Sensitivity

- Respect for every patient
- Reconsider the use of terms like big bed, large chair….use “another” or “better” or “more comfortable”
- Recognize that obesity is not just a personal problem. It is a universal health problem with major health consequences.
Thank you for listening!

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References

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