

July 2005

## I've Fallen, and I Can't Get Up

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### Recommended Citation

"I've Fallen, and I Can't Get Up" (2005). *Articles - Patient Care*. 7.  
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## “I’ve Fallen, and I Can’t Get Up”

This statement is in ads for a brand of alert buttons, Life Alert. The ads show a person alone, lying on the floor and unable to get up without assistance. The alert button is being sold to provide a way for people who may fall in their homes to call for help.

### **Why is there the need for alert buttons? How common are falls at home?**

Thirty percent (30 %) of people over 65 years old, and living on their own in the community, fall each year. As people get older, many of those falls can cause injuries that lead to admission to the hospital. In fact, Connecticut’s most common and expensive injuries are fall related.

### **John Dempsey Hospital will be the safest hospital in Connecticut as we follow plans to protect patients.**

While in the hospital for any condition, patients over 65 years old are at risk to fall during their hospital stay. University of Connecticut Health Center employees must know the risks that our patients have to fall while in the hospital, what actions we are taking to decrease those risks, and what actions to prevent injuries if a patient does fall. Some of these actions are:

- Assess all patients on admission using the Fall Risk Identification Tool to find out what help the patient may need.
- Watch patients stand from a sitting position to see if they are unsteady.
- Walk with patients to see if their steps are uneven or they shuffle.
- Follow patient care plans that include the use of hospital beds that lower to just 16 inches above the floor.
- Use the night lights on hospital beds to help with safer movement when it is dark.
- Place a yellow bracelet on patients at risk to fall.
- Place yellow buttons at the patient bedside to help staff know to watch these patients more closely when they get out of bed to walk.

### **Patient falls are one of the areas we must address to become the safest hospital.**

In addition to the actions listed, a new plan is being developed to better care for patients who are confused. As health care

The Collaborative Center for Clinical Care Improvement (“C4I”) is dedicated to making John Dempsey Hospital the safest hospital in the State of Connecticut. Please send feedback and comments to:  
James O. Menzoian, MD and Rhea Sanford, RN, PhD, CS—Co-Directors



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July 2005

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workers, we do not always know if this confusion can be treated so that it goes away, or if it is permanent for the patient. There are tools that can be used to assess patients and help find out if the confusion is called *delirium*, a type of confusion that can be treated and cured. A program will be implemented this year to identify *delirium* and to provide a plan of care that treats it.

### Who helps prevent the risk of patient falls at UCHC?

All UCHC staff can help protect patients from the risk of falls or from injury if a fall should happen.

- Patient care areas need to be kept as clean as possible.
- Hallways and walkways should be kept clear of items that could cause a patient to trip.
- Patient call bells should always be kept close to the patient so the patient can let staff know if they need something.
- We all need to pay attention if the patient has a yellow wrist band.
- We all need to pay attention if the symbol below is by the patient's bed.



### Helpful Information on Fall Prevention

Connecticut Collaboration for  
Fall Prevention  
<http://www.fallprevention.org>

The Centers for Disease Control  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/falls.htm>

## Patient Falls Quiz

The goal of UCHC is to do everything possible to prevent falls. If a fall does occur, our goal is to provide a safe environment that prevents any serious injury.

### Please take the following true or false patient falls quiz:

1. The goal of UCHC is to prevent serious injury for any patient who falls.  
*True or False?*
2. All patients admitted to JDH are assessed using the Fall Risk Identification Tool.  
*True or False?*
3. Patients who are at risk to fall wear a yellow wrist band.  
*True or False?*
4. All UCHC staff can help keep the patient care environment clean and safe.  
*True or False?*

Answers to all of the above questions are TRUE.

*Rhea Sanford, RN, PhD, CS  
Co-Director, C4I  
Chairperson, C4I Falls Subgroup  
679-3519*

### Collaborative Center for Clinical Care Improvement ("C4I")

#### Vision

To become the safest hospital within the State of Connecticut

#### Mission

Create a culture of excellence based upon the highest quality of patient care delivered

#### Future Newsletters:

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