

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Clinical News to Use

Technology can help address specific fall risks for "frequent fallers" or residents at highest risk for fall-related injuries. For example, Guido, a smart robotic walker, helps prevent people with low vision and mobility problems from banging into or stumbling over obstacles. The system scans the environment and gives the user warning messages to help her steer clear of obstacles. If the user fails to heed the warning, Guido refuses to head in the direction of the obstacle. For more information, go to www.haptica.com/id2.htm.

LaserCane can help residents with Parkinson's disease who tend to shuffle or freeze. As the person presses the tip of the cane down, it beams a red laser line in front of the feet to remind the person to lift his foot higher and move forward with less shuffling. For more information, go to www.ustep.com/cane.htm.

FallSaver is a wireless fall alarm (a patch placed on the person's leg). The alarm goes off when the person's leg is at a certain angle indicating that he's trying to get up, says **Jonathan Weatherly**, CEO of Your Choice Living, which sells the product.

"Unlike other fall alarms, this one goes off if the person sits down on his own," he tells **Eli**.

Related software identifies an individual's pattern of trying to stand up unassisted so that staff can preempt the person's needs. The software can also identify patterns of residents trying to get up unassisted in certain areas of the facility or during certain times of the day, which may reflect staffing or care issues, Weatherly says. For more information, go to www.ycliving.com/fallsaverprod.php.

Editor's note: For a fall-risk assessment checklist that includes medications known to increase fall risk, go to www.va.gov/NCPS/CogAids/FallPrevention/index.html.