

## MDS Alert

### Care Planning: Use Section G3 To Get A Heads Up On Residents With Balance Problems

#### Compare your coding to the resident's care plan.

Balance problems coded in Section G3 can flag a resident who may be a fall waiting to happen. But you may not know it if you don't take a close look at the MDS.

That's because coding a balance problem sitting or standing won't trigger the fall RAP, cautions **Rena Shephard, RN, MHA, FACDONA**, president of **RRS Healthcare Consulting** in San Diego. "The balance test for sitting, coded as 1, 2 or 3, triggers the psychotropic drug RAP," says Shephard. "The balance test while standing doesn't trigger anything," she adds.

Even so, if you code the resident as having a balance problem--and he falls--the facility has a potential liability and survey issue on its hands if the care team didn't address that fall risk factor, Shephard cautions. For example, surveyors could compare coding at G3 to a resident's fall management care plan.

#### Look for the Underlying Cause

If the MDS team codes a resident as having a balance problem in Section G3, the physician and nurses should look for an underlying medical cause--for example, orthostatic hypotension or medications, advises **Pauline Franko, PT, MCSP**, in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. "The interdisciplinary team can then decide whether to request a therapy evaluation to look for treatable causes such as decreased range of motion at the ankles or knees or lower-extremity muscle weakness," she says.

**Did you know?** "About 70 percent of falls result from balance problems ... and most are due to lower extremity weakness and posture" that a structured exercise program can help, according to **Denise Wassenaar, RN, MS**, speaking at the recent annual **American Association of Homes & Services for the Aging** conference in San Antonio.

Editor's note: For more expert tips on fall risk assessment and management, see "Stay One Step Ahead Of Falls And Fall-Related Injuries" in the March 2006 Long-Term Care Survey Alert. For subscription information, call 1-800-508-2582.