

OASIS Alert

Follow Through with Fall Risk Interventions

Consider this unexpected consequence of high marks.

Because M1910 □ Fall Risk Assessment is a publicly reported measure, many agencies have been focused on being able to respond "Yes" 100 percent of the time, says **Rhonda Will, RN, BS, COS-C, BCHH-C**, with Northampton, Mass.-based **Fazzi Associates**. But the more important question is "What can I do with the information I gathered?" she contends.

If you don't do something with the falls risk information you gather, the danger of harm to patients due to falls will continue, Will says.

Take a closer look: Study your rates of falls, Will suggests. Are they going down? And when are they occurring within an episode? Many agencies focus only on the first week of care, but data vendors are finding falls occurring at the 30-day mark, she says. Agencies need to shift practices if this is the case.

Figuring out how to prevent falls should be an inter-disciplinary effort, Will says. Forming a quality committee made up of nurses and therapists to look at risk areas and how you're addressing them is a good start, she says.

The same risk factor can cut across disciplines, Will points out. For example, incontinence is a falls risk factor. To help prevent falls, therapy might address related concerns such as equipment and ambulation. But clinicians can help these patients as well by determining the cause of the incontinence. Medication, pathology, and the aging body can all be causes of incontinence. These are areas where a clinician should determine whether there are other actions that could address the condition.

Don't let a Focus on Perfection Trip You Up

"If I were a regulating body, I'd start looking closely at agencies with 100 percent scores for fall risk assessment," Will says. Over time, CMS might want to examine whether agencies with 100 percent scores have a corresponding low rate of fall-related emergency department visits, she points out.

Keep in mind: The way you complete the OASIS today impacts future policy, Will points out.