



TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT PATIENT FALLS

UVA AltaVista Dialysis Center

AltaVista, VA

Contact Information

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Category:

Patient Falls

Type of Facility:

University of Virginia Dialysis Unit

Number of Patients:

90

Background

AltaVista Dialysis Center is part of the University of Virginia (UVA) Medical Center system, which includes 11 dialysis facilities. Opened in April 2008, AltaVista serves 90 patients and plans to expand their capacity by adding additional shifts and chairs.

AltaVista was the first facility in the UVA system to earn 5 Diamond status from the 5-Diamond Patient Safety Program, which was developed by the ESRD Network of New England (Network 1) and the Mid-Atlantic Renal Coalition (Network 5) to assist dialysis facilities with the improvement of both staff and patient awareness of patient safety. The 5-Diamond Patient Safety program consists of 8 components. For each component completed, each facility will be tiered as a 1-Diamond, 2-Diamond, 3-Diamond, 4-Diamond, or 5-Diamond facility.

The 5 Diamond Program has been endorsed by RPA and fits with the Keeping Kidney Patients Safe Patient Safety Events in several areas including patient falls, medication errors and omission and hand hygiene. AltaVista decided to pursue the 5 Diamond Program as a guideline for systematic best practices throughout their facility. They utilized the 5-Diamond's "Slips, Trips and Falls" module to address patient falls. Additionally, the facility was inspired to make broader efforts to reduce patient falls after seeing the reduction in patient falls after patients worked with a physical therapist to increase their strength and balance.



Policies implemented:

AltaVista has instituted procedures to help prevent patient falls and improve patient safety.

1. Patients receive monthly foot exams to check for ulcers and decreased sensation.
2. Patients are asked about how steady they feel.
3. Staff assesses assistive devices used by patients for stability and fit.
4. The exercise physiologist works with patients to improve their strength and balance through the use of equipment such as exercise bikes and stair machines.
5. The social worker conducts an environmental survey of the facility and discusses with the patient potential hazards in their home.
6. AltaVista publishes a monthly newsletter for patients. The August 2008 newsletter focused on fall education and prevention and included tips for preventing falls at home, such as making sure the home is well lit and clutter-free. The newsletter also featured a series of exercises to improve balance.

AltaVista plans to work with their exercise physiologist to develop new fall-prevention programs. They also plan to provide additional tips on fall prevention to their patients in one of their spring 2009 newsletters.