

Usefulness of a Single-Track Ceiling Lift

Teresa Pasquini, RN, BSN, CSPHP

We have had a successful safe patient movement program since 2006, but we did not acquire ceiling lifts until last year (2013). We were initially content with the implementation of mobile lifts, which were available on every nursing unit and we even justified the benefit of having mobile lifts instead of ceiling lifts. Often times we stressed the value of having mobile lifts because they can be transported to assist with any incidents that may occur in a corridor or outside of the patient's room. We opened our Wound Center and even though this was an outpatient ambulatory department, the population of the center often times required the assistance of a mobile lift. This is when we began to face some obstacles.

When designing and ordering fixtures and furnishings for the Wound Center, we did not take into consideration or did not realize that many of the patients that would be receiving treatment in the center did not have the ability to ambulate or transfer to the exam tables with minimal assistance. In fact, the majority of the patients that received treatment in our Wound Center required maximum assistance and usually arrived by a medi-car service and had been transported in a wheelchair. The largest barrier was that the available mobile lifts that we purchased for patient transfers were not low-castered lifts. The legs of our mobile lift did not fit under the exam carts and treatment chairs. As the safe patient movement program coordinator, I researched the availability of low-castered lifts and at that time, there were not any available for me to purchase. Some of the companies had low-castered lifts in product development, but they were not yet available to be purchased. At this time we were faced with the challenge of providing a safe environment for the patients we served while also ensuring a safe work environment for our employees.

The Wound Center was a fairly new unit and would not require any remodeling in the near future; I was not sure that my idea to install ceiling lifts would be well received by senior leadership or the construction manager. After receiving approval from senior leadership and confirmation that the rooms in the Wound Center could accommodate the installation of ceiling lifts from the construction manager and the chosen vendor, 2 straight track, motorized ceiling lifts were installed in 2 of the 4 exam rooms. When installing ceiling lifts, it is important to consider the type of activities that will occur in the setting, as well as, the need to move the patient in multiple directions.

When using a straight track ceiling lift, the patient has to be in the same location to utilize the lift. The straight track accommodated the Wound Center because patients were always in the same location and only being transferred to the exam chair/table. We chose a 600 pound capacity motor because our exam chairs and table accommodated up to 500 pounds. We chose the straight track ceiling lift because the Wound Center is an outpatient treatment department and the patients receiving treatment would not have the need to be moved in multiple directions within the exam room. The straight track ceiling lift met the needs of our wound nurses and the patients they served. The installation of the ceiling lifts improved the work environment for our staff and also demonstrated our commitment of providing a safe environment for our patients.