

Irwell Rest Home: Falls Prevention Initiatives

Irwell Rest Home participated in the Aged Related Residential Care mini-collaborative¹ to reduce harm from falls. The collaborative was established by the Health Quality and Safety Commission in conjunction with the Accident Compensation Corporation and three Wellington based district health boards.

About Irwell

Irwell Rest Home is situated in Island Bay, Wellington. It is a privately owned rest home with 60 beds. Irwell’s vision is to:

“Create a ‘family’ orientated rest home, ensuring a ‘stress-free’ life-style for our residents.”

Irwell selected one staff member to go along to the Falls Prevention Learning Sets. The staff member was selected because she is

“Good at transferring what she learns to her job and her colleagues.”

Falls prevention at Irwell

Irwell has a quality improvement committee that includes representatives from across the team: the managers, a registered nurse and the care coordinator.

Irwell charts falls data (along with other types of data) and compares trends over time - although they emphasised that there is no pattern. In a small facility one resident who falls frequently can make a big difference to trend data.

“One fall makes a big difference in a small rest home.”

The Irwell staff work as a team to keep an eye on residents.

“All of our staff are aware and know if someone needs assistance. It’s everybody, not just the registered nurse. We all work as team here.”

“We are all working to ensure the residents have a safe and happy environment - the only way you can do that is by involving all staff.”

Falls that do happen are recorded in two categories – falls and near-misses. Falls charts and falls crosses are displayed for the team to see.



Figure 1: Irwell’s falls data graphs

¹ <http://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/reducing-harm-from-falls/projects/arcc-mini-collaborative/>

There is balance between preventing falls and maintaining the independence of residents, especially in a rest home level facility.

“You can’t stop falls they are going to happen – you can’t prevent all falls.”

“The biggest challenge is getting the resident to accept the boundaries.”

Each fall or near miss is reviewed to understand the reason for the fall or the near miss. Learnings are applied across the facility to prevent other falls.

“If they fall you need to understand why and fix it.”

The falls prevention initiatives Irwell has in place focus on the rest home as a whole ensuring falls risks are minimised (monitoring the use of stairs, hand rails) and on interventions for individual residents.

“We have learnt what to do by experience and reviewing what happens when someone has a fall.”

“We are small and we have the ability to make the changes.”

The falls prevention initiative

The Irwell representative went to two of the Learning Sets with the expectation of learning practical information about how to prevent falls as part of a continuous improvement process for falls prevention.

“It can only improve.”

However, the representative who attended the Learning Sets was disappointed in the lack of new practical information and ideas.

“I was expecting to learn about falls but all the talk was about graphs. I was hoping for more examples more about prevention. But everything that was spoken about we are already doing.”

No changes have been as a result of the falls prevention initiative. The Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle might have been helpful if new ideas had been identified to try it out on.

Suggestions of what might be helpful in further developing Irwell’s falls prevention programme included:

- A really practical focus of a course on falls prevention initiatives that the facility could put in place.
- One-on-one support from a falls advisor coming to the facility. The advisor could also be available to be called on for advice if there was a series of falls.
- Information about the costs of falls

The cost of education is high for small facilities and courses attend need to represent value for money. Shorter off-site meetings would be better than a day-long meeting.