April is “No Falls” month

More than 30 per cent of people over the age of 65 will suffer a fall at least once a year – this is the message being shared this month, April No Falls, by the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (Health Service).

Chair of the Sunshine Coast Falls Action Group, Deb Murray said April No Falls month is a time to raise awareness of falls and fall related injuries and their impact on patients, families and the Health Service.

“This year facilities across our Health Service are participating in the ‘Stay On Your Feet’ state-wide campaign with a focus on falls and prevention strategies for people living with dementia,” Ms Murray said.

“Our staff are participating in a series of state-wide education sessions including early recognition and management of patients with cognitive impairment to help decrease falls risk.

“Posters and brochures will be widely distributed throughout the month and staff have been encouraged to start a conversation with patients and their families.”

More than one quarter of all hospitalisations for people with dementia are due to falls. The good news is that there are steps families can take to decrease the chance of a family member with dementia falling.

Older people living with dementia are at twice the risk of falling. Sadly, less than 50 per cent of people who are injured in a fall and go to hospital never go home again.

Ms Murray said falls prevention is important for everyone and becomes paramount as we age.

“For those who suffer from dementia it is vital that simple changes are made in and around the home. Making simple home modifications can be a big help in fact, the installation of grab rails has been shown to decrease the fall rate by 30 per cent.
“Simply providing support to a person with dementia to engage in activities and exercise will assist with strength, balance, flexibility and endurance.

To make your home safer, go to http://www.health.qld.gov.au/stayonyourfeet/ and complete a Stay on Your Feet Checklist today.

For more information on dementia: http://www.qld.gov.au/seniors/health/mental-healthawareness/

Fall Facts:
What is a fall? A fall is an event which results in a person coming to rest unintentionally on the ground or other lower level.

Did you know? The annual incidence of falls in the cognitively impaired population (including delirium and dementia) is double that of the normal population. In addition, up to 26 per cent of all hospitalisations in people with dementia relate to falls and fractures. While delirium increases the risk of falls, early recognition and management improves patient outcomes.

How many people fall? In 2013, there were 926 falls reported within the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service.

At what cost? Queensland spends more than twice as much on the treatment of falls in older people than on victims of road traffic crashes. The issue of falls will only grow as the population ages. A patient who sustains a fall will stay an average of eleven additional days, based on an average cost of $1,117 per day adding up to $12,287 per patient exclusive of costs for surgery or wound-care that may be required.

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Media contact: Jude Rhodes, Media and Communications Officer
Tel: 5489 8617 or 0408 713 747