Gympie Hospital focuses on preventing falls: in the community and in hospital

Gympie Hospital staff are helping keep residents on their feet.

Gympie Hospital’s Team Leader, Allied Health, Christian Cavaniglia said staff were working with residents to promote independence in day-to-day tasks and maintain a safe and satisfying quality of life.

Each year in Australia, falls cause 75 per cent of injury-related hospital admissions in adults over the age of 65 years.

With a larger proportion of its population aged 50 to 75 years, the Gympie community has higher rates of falls risk.

Mr Cavaniglia said the health service took a collaborative approach to falls prevention, involving nurses, allied health, medical teams, G.P.’s, patients and their families.

“We are focusing on preventing falls both when someone is an inpatient in our hospital and also when they’ve been discharged home and into the community,” he said.

By focusing on preventing falls in the community, we are ultimately reducing the strain on carers, the health system and services in the community, and reducing the incidences of people having to be admitted to hospital due to a fall.

“Inpatient falls occur mainly at the bedside and in the bathroom, and the most commonly reported causes of inpatient falls are overbalancing, slipping and legs giving way.

“Many of our assessments and interventions with the elderly, sick or disabled centre around promoting independence and a safe, satisfying quality of life.

“As part of this approach, the prevention of falls is integral to sustaining wellness and preventing future ill-health, disability and disease associated post-fall, such as obesity, type two diabetes, pain/chronic pain, reduced social engagement and mental health disorders.”

To assist those at risk of falls, Gympie Hospital staff provide a range of services for clients prior to discharge into the community, including:

- medication review
- education, information and targeted interventions for clients and their families/carers/services, thorough analysis of the cause of falls
- occupational therapist’s home visit assessment
- community access assessment and intervention.
Tips on what you can do to prevent falls:

- Some medications can increase your chances of experiencing a falls related injury, especially when taking multiple long term medication. It is therefore important to regularly review your medications with your treating doctor.
- Regular exercise can improve strength, balance, and power and therefore help prevent falls. Walking, swimming, yoga, Pilates, and tai chi are all good options. Some types of exercise can also help to keep your bones strong and help prevent osteoporosis. Speak to your health professional to see what exercises are best. If you have pain, dizziness, or problems breathing during or after any exercise, stop. Talk with your physical therapist, nurse, or doctor about what you’re experiencing and before you continue.
- Eating a healthy diet and drinking plenty of water can ensure that your body is correctly hydrated and has the right amount of nutrients to sustain a healthy lifestyle. Make an appointment with your local nutritionist/dietitian for more information and assessment.
- Remove clutter from your home and ensure that you have the right equipment in the home so that you stay safe. Consider buying non slip socks.
- If you have other chronic health conditions understand the risks these can have on falls and have regular reviews with your treating doctor.
- Spend some time outdoors; this can boost your energy levels, improve your mood, and boost your vitamin D intake.

ENDS

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