

Bariatric patients

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Obesity in the population poses a unique challenge for NHS staff in terms of rehabilitation services. This is especially the case with regard to adequate provision of manual handling equipment.

Plus-size people can have a wide variety of body shapes in addition to differences in BMI. Two people may weigh the same, however, how their weight is distributed may be completely different. Body shapes are based on waist-to-hip ratio and are commonly classified into categories. Each body shape poses its own functional challenges in relation to transfers, mobility and equipment selection.

Definitions

"The term Bariatric is used to describe the field of medicine that focuses on the causes, prevention, treatment and management of obesity and its associated diseases." Mosby's Medical Dictionary (2016)

Body Mass Index = BMI – measures body fat based on height and weight.

Obese = BMI greater than 30 to less than 40.

Morbidly obese = BMI of 40kg/m², or the individual being 45kg over ideal weight.

Bariatric Patient = someone who weighs in excess of 160kgs (25 stone) and has limitations in health and social care due to their weight, physical size, health, morbidity, tissue viability and access to their own environment.

To ensure staff's health and safety is not compromised, managers should review their manual handling policies, procedures, practices, adequacy of equipment and staff training when treating bariatric patients.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) released a detailed research report, with findings revealing that 40 – 70 per cent of NHS Trusts do not have a bariatric policy. These are needed to lead the process for the planning, assessment and management of manual handling risks, including the number of staff, provision of appropriate equipment and intra and inter-agency communication. Spatial risk factors were identified, and it was also revealed that over half of the trusts that did have policies had not looked at the requirement for adequate space.

The HSE report contains the following recommendations for future bariatric strategies: strategic policies need to be formulated to equip the NHS for the rapidly growing obese population in England.

operational policies are needed to lead the process of planning, assessment and management of the manual handling risks for the care and treatment of bariatric patients.

buildings and vehicles need to be designed to accommodate bariatric patients in safety and comfort and with dignity.

equipment needs to be designed to 'fit' a range of bariatric shapes and sizes (using population data).

training is needed to support the assessment of bariatric patients and the use of specialist manual handling and clinical equipment.

The national back exchange has also produced some standards for moving and handling bariatric patients.