

Selecting equipment for obese patients

Planning for appropriate care for obese patients starts the moment the patient pulls into the parking lot.

Among issues to consider, says Judy Crouch, RN, MSN, APRN, BC, weight management and bariatrics nurse practitioner at Mercy General Health Partners in Muskegon, Mich, who completed a hospitalwide assessment:

- Is parking convenient?
- Does the sidewalk have handrails, particularly if there is an incline?
- Does the waiting area have furniture that can accommodate heavier patients and their families?

Finding “bariatric” furniture expensive, Medical Center East in Birmingham, Ala, purchased all love seats for its waiting area. It started with a few love seats, then found those were often occupied by other patients, leaving the obese patients to stand. More love seats were added.

Determine weight limits

Organize a team to determine the weight limit for all existing patient care equipment—OR tables, imaging tables, scales, wheelchairs, and so forth, suggests Susan Gallagher, RN, PhD, CWOCN, a wound and ostomy nurse who specializes in clinical and ethical aspects of caring for obese patients.

“Then you will know in advance, for example, that your MRI can only take patients up to a certain size,” she says. One hospital, faced with an emergency involving an obese patient, cut out a wall so the patient could be taken into the room with the CT scanner, only to find the table would not accommodate the patient’s weight.

Finding it’s not always easy to get weight limit data or labels from manufacturers, some facilities are designing their own labels for transfer equipment, OR tables, specialty beds, and so forth, adds Janine Gesek, RN, MSN, program director of risk management services for ECRI, who spoke at a recent ECRI audioconference on surgery for obese patients.

SizeWise Rentals, a company that rents bariatric equipment, has a protocol on its web site for selecting equipment based on patient measurements and body mass index (www.size-wise.net).

Long-term approach

Many hospitals are taking a long-term approach for expensive capital equipment.

Mission St Joseph’s Hospital in Asheville, NC, has been changing over to heavier-duty equipment gradually for 4 or 5 years.

“This has been part of our OR budget for the past few years,” says Al Warren, business manager for surgical services. “We now have several 1,000-lb tables, longer laparoscopic instruments, and so forth.” The hospital purchased them although it did not begin a weight-loss surgery program until about a year ago. One OR will be equipped specifically for bariatric surgery.

Equipment tips

Some suggestions on equipment:

Toilets. Wall-mounted toilets are rated for about 250 lb to 280 lb and can break off if heavier patients use them, notes Rona Scott, Medical Center East’s program coordinator for bariatric surgery. Her hospital found a simple and inexpensive solution—sliding a bariatric commode with pan removed over the wall-mounted stool. The commode has handles, an added safety feature. The commodes cost

about \$180. The hospital has installed a couple of toilets for large patients, but Scott says they look like “prison toilets,” stainless steel with no seat.

Scales. Weighing devices should accommodate patients up to at least 600 lb, preferably 800 lb, Scott recommends.

Wheelchairs. Have a bariatric wheelchair available on every floor.

Beds. Inventory all patient beds and gurneys and document weight limits, Gesek suggests. Consider width of beds, doors, elevators, and corridors.

“Review with the staff the policy that any patient who exceeds the stated weight limit for the gurney must be transported in a bed or in a patient-lift device,” she adds. Consider gurneys and beds with larger wheels because they move more easily over carpet with less stress on the staff. Instruct the staff to lock wheels when the gurney or bed is stopped to prevent patient or staff injury.

Medical Center East uses a special bariatric bed that eliminates the need for a gurney. After surgery, patients are transferred from the OR table directly to the bed, which is wheeled to the postanesthesia care unit and on to the med-surg unit. The bed has a “comfort zone” of 350 lb and a weight limit of 500 lb.

“Even our 400- to 500-lb patients are comfortable. It’s rare we have to rent a bed,” says Scott.

When an obese patient is ambulating, she suggests that nurses, rather than taking the patient’s arm, have the patient use a bariatric walker. The nurse walks behind with a bariatric wheelchair. Then if the patient feels unsteady, he or she can just sit down in the wheelchair.

Blood pressure cuffs. Even extra-large blood pressure cuffs tend not to fit well on large patients because of the shape of their upper arms. The forearm is often easier, and frequently a normal-sized cuff can be used.

Sequential compression devices (SCDs). Check circumference of thighs and calves to purchase the correct size of SCDs used for the prevention of deep vein thrombosis. In general, there is no clinical difference among foot-squeezing, knee-high, or thigh-high stockings. Though foot-squeezing devices work well, many obese patients have plantar fasciitis, so some physicians prefer not to put anything on the feet. ❖

Equipment directory

Equipment for care of obese patients in surgery.

Air Pal

800/633-4725

www.airpal.com

Inflatable patient transfer mattress creates less friction for moving patients.

Allen Medical Systems

800/433-5774

www.allenmedical.com

Products for bariatric patients include table pads and accessories and the new long Patient Transfer Board.

Burke Bariatric

800/255-4147

www.burkebariatric.com

Tri-Flex II bariatric bed with 1,000-lb capacity has integrated scales and trapeze option.

Dale Medical Products, Inc

800/343-3980

www.dalemed.com

Latex-free care products include tracheostomy tube holder, Foley catheter holder, abdominal binders, bendable arm boards, and postsurgical bra.

Gendron

800/537-2521

www.gendroninc.com

Bariatric beds, stretchers, powered wheelchairs, shower and commode chairs, patient lifts, and furniture.

Getinge USA

800/475-9040

www.getingeusa.com

Maquet Alphamaxx surgical tables with 1000-lb patient weight capacity designed for patient ergonomics with full articulation in normal and reverse orientation.

Hill-Rom Services

800/445-3730

www.hill-rom.com/USA

Magnum II bariatric patient care system holds patients up to 800 lb and functions as a bed, a chair, and transport vehicle. Total Care bariatric bed system has 500-lb limit.

HoverTech International

800/471-2776

www.hovermatt.com

Inflatable HoverMatt patient transfer mattress has no weight limit and can be used with x-ray and MRI.

Invacare

800/333-6900

www.invacare.com

Bariatric and heavy-duty products include beds, wheelchairs, lifts, slings, and trapezes.

Inventive Products Inc

800/356-6911

www.apc.net/ipi/slippinfo.htm

The Slipp is a two-layer vinyl patient transfer sheet that is not air powered.

KCI

800/275-4524

www.kci1.com

EZ Lift battery-powered patient lift/transfer system with 1,000 lb capacity.

BariMaxx II bed system with pressure reduction environment for patients up to 1,000 lb.

Kendall

800/962-9888

www.kendallhq.com

SCD sequential compression system in large sizes for prophylaxis for deep vein thrombosis.

Liko Inc

888/545-6671

www.liko.com

The UltraTwin FreeSpan freestanding patient lifting device for patients up to 880 lb.

Rehab Seating Systems

800/525-7328

www.rehabseating.com

Ascender bariatric chair assists patients in rising from a chair while lessening the chance of caregiver injury.

Scale-Tronix

800/873-2001

www.scale-tronix.com

Stand-on scale for patients up to 1,000 lb.

SIZEWise Rentals

800/814-9389

www.sizewise.net

Nationwide rental for bariatric rehabilitation equipment with weight capacities up to 1,000 lb.

Skytron

800/759-8766

www.skytron.us/

Hercules 6500HD bariatric/general purpose surgical table provides full body imaging capability, including 1,000-lb lift, 850-lb articulation, and 180-degree top rotation. Optional table extensions.

Steris Corporation

800/548-4873

www.steris.com

Bariatric table extensions for Amsco 3080/3085 SP surgical tables rated for patients up to 1000 lb. Electric-powered stretcher with extra-wide top and pressure care mattress has 625-lb capacity.

Stretchair

800/237-1162

www.stretchair.com

Combination wheelchair-stretchers for bariatric patients with capacities up to 1,000 lb.

Stryker

800/787-9537

www.strykermedical.com

Bariatric stretchers and tables.

Trumpf Medical Systems

843/534-0606

www.us.trumpf-med.com

Titan surgical table has a 1,000 lb capacity. It is fully articulated, modular, split leg, and mobile with complete longitudinal movement and extreme low-height adjustment.

Wheelchairs of Kansas

800/537-6454

www.wheelchairsofkansas.com

Bariatric products such as wheelchairs, beds, lifts, and walkers.

We have attempted to provide a complete list. If any vendor has been omitted, we apologize.