BACKGROUND

According to the 2013 Bureau of Labor statistics, US hospitals recorded 58,860 work-related injuries and illnesses that caused employees to miss work in 2011, with nearly half of these injuries were caused by over-exertion.

- Hospitals are among the most hazardous places to work with 253,700 reported healthcare worker injuries (HCWIs) in 2011.
- The incidence of non-fatal occupational injuries in HCWs was 6.8 per 100 full-time employees compared with 3.5 per 200 in all US industries combined.
- The number of work-related injuries among HCWs surpasses injury rates in construction and manufacturing.
- The average worker’s compensation claim ranged from $15,860 to $22,300 per injury.
- The average hospital incurs $0.78 in losses due to workers’ compensation claims for every $100 of payroll, equivalent to a total national annual cost of $2 billion.
- Recommendations to reduce HCWIs include appropriate use of equipment, minimal-lift policies and patient assessment tools, and training on proper use of equipment.

METHODS

- The study was conducted at SwedishAmerican Hospital, a 333-bed, full-service, non-profit hospital located in Rockford, IL.
- Evidence-based procedures were written to address safe patient handling, with these procedures implemented in all clinical units.
- The procedures addressed appropriate methods and equipment to meet patient-specific needs to improve the safety of patients and HCWs during lateral patient transfers.
- The new lateral transfer procedures were incorporated into the policy and equipment guidelines of the hospital and disseminated to staff though education programs supplemented by written and verbal communications.
- Approximately 1,500 staff received training on the proper use of a lateral transfer device.
- Each employee was required to successfully complete a competency assessment to evaluate their knowledge and skills for appropriate use of the patient transfer device.
- HCWI rates were monitored following implementation of the evidence-based procedures and the lateral transfer device.

RESULTS

- Healthcare worker injuries were summarized for 2011 and 2012 to establish a pre-intervention injury rate.
- The total number of HCWIs in 2011 was 41, with 37 HCWIs occurring in 2012 prior to the implementation of the intervention in January 2013.
- The rate of HCWIs declined to 10 in 2013 and 8 in 2014, for an overall reduction in injuries of 76.9% (Figure 2).
- The three injuries in June 2014 were due to:
  - One employee did not request assistance or use the lateral transfer device when moving a patient.
  - Another employee did not take time to use the lateral transfer device, although it was readily available in the patient’s room.
  - One employee was injured when a patient lost their balance while being weighed.
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DISCUSSION

- This study demonstrates the effect of an evidence-based educational intervention and use of a device to assist with lateral patient transfers on rates of HCWIs at a single institution.
- Utilization of the device was maintained at a fairly consistent rate in 2013 and 2014, following implementation of the device in January 2013.
- There were two notable spikes in HCWI rates in September 2013 (n=4) and June 2014 (n=5).
- Hospital analysis of these injuries revealed that the September 2013 injuries were due to:
  - One employee did not request assistance or use the lateral transfer device when moving a patient.
  - Another employee did not take time to use the lateral transfer device, although it was readily available in the patient’s room.
  - One employee was injured when a patient lost their balance while being weighed.
  - One employee was providing care in a home setting and did not have access to the device or assistance from colleagues to move the patient.

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the impact of implementation of patient safe-handling protocols and a lateral patient transfer device on HCWI rates.