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Austin Company Solves Patient Care Dilemma

AUSTIN—The dilemma: all patients need to be moved, lifted, repositioned and transported around the hospital in the course of care, yet lifting and moving patients is the number one cause of muscle and back injuries to caregivers. Enter Austin-based TechniMotion Medical, whose products are designed for safety, ease and convenience of both caregiver and patient. TechniMotion Medical's Proxi-Motion™ patient lift and Shuttle-Motion™ bedside transfer chair reduce and even eliminate hospital expenses related to injuries from patient handling.

TechniMotion Medical debuted its solutions to the dilemma to wide praise on March 30th, 2009, at the 9th Annual Safe Patient Handling and Movement Conference in Orlando, Florida. More than 500 of the most knowledgeable and influential professionals in the world on the subject of safe patient handling and movement attended the conference. "We are extremely gratified by the response to our products from this important audience," said Dr. William E. Burak, Jr., President and co-founder of TechniMotion Medical. "They told us that our products are truly innovative and address the issues they have been wrestling with for decades."

TechniMotion Medical's innovations include a patient lift device, the Proxi-Motion™, that gently lifts a patient in a similar fashion to a nurse using her own arms; and the Shuttle-Motion™ bedside chair. The Proxi-Motion™ lift easily places a patient into a bed, chair, wheelchair, toilet, and even an automobile, which was especially popular at the recent Conference. The Shuttle-Motion™ is the only chair able to extend over the center of a patient's bed, enabling a simple and safe transfer over the mattress. Co-founder and ergonomic designer Frederic Palay said "Safety is the priority. A transfer over the bed is much safer than a transfer over the floor, because being a few inches above a soft surface is safer than being several feet above a hard floor."

The Proxi-Motion™ lift approaches the patient from a low angle with a gently curved lifting arm. A unique two-part sling makes placement under the patient fast and easy. The slings were designed to be easily inserted under the patient by a single caregiver; traditional slings require that a patient be rolled like a log in one direction and then the other in order to get a sling underneath, and log-rolling requires two caregivers in order to be done safely. The slings incorporate semi-rigid pieces, minimizing the squeeze a patient feels in a traditional lift and sling. The caregiver pushes a button to smoothly raise the patient from the bed surface, while the patient remains in the same seated or reclined position as they were on the bed, contributing to the patient's feeling of comfort, safety, and stability.

The inspiration behind the products, Burak said, is that he and Palay agreed they would not want

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Working together, the Proxi-Motion™ and Shuttle-Motion™ gently transfer patients in complete comfort.

their own mothers to be lifted by anything currently on the market. “Traditional patient lifts haven’t changed since they were re-purposed from industrial hoists made to lift objects like car engines,” said Palay. “They approach the patient from above like a crane, put them in a pinching sling, and swing them in the air like a crazy carnival ride.”

“Patients need to spend time out of bed in order to speed their recovery and prevent complications,” said Burak, “yet caregivers suffer injuries because there is no ergonomically safe way to manually lift a patient. I saw this every day in my surgical practice and recognized the need for a better system.”

Chronic pain, lost work days, early retirement, disabilities, and workers compensation are just a few of the costs of patient transfer injuries to caregivers. Patients suffer injuries from drops and falls when being lifted or moved, and incur complications like bedsores and pneumonia when they don’t get out of bed often enough. These complications come at a high cost since Medicare and most insurers do not reimburse hospitals for the treatment of these preventable “never events”.

Compounding the problem of an already scarce healthcare workforce are increasing patient populations that are older and heavier, and increased demands for excellence in care from patients, regulators and payers of medical expenses. “We planned a win-win-win solution with our products: by preventing of the costs of injuries hospitals win, with improved ease and speed of use caregivers win, and with superior comfort and dignity patients win,” said Burak.

To make the devices readily accessible they were designed to serve inconspicuously as part of the normal room furniture. Burak said the Proxi-Motion™ lift ‘hides’ as an overbed patient table and the Shuttle-Motion™ chair ‘hides’ as an ordinary bedside chair.

All combine for an inconspicuous, comfortable, and easy transfer for the caregiver and patient.

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