

Safety and health alert

05/01 Patient trolley injuries

Incident

During 1999 at a large metropolitan hospital the side of a drop sided patient trolley (similar to that shown in the photo below) fell and amputated the tip of a patient's finger.

Several lower back injuries have also been reported after employees have manually adjusted (lifted or lowered) the headboard of similar trolleys. The problem is exacerbated if the patient is either uncooperative or is heavy.

As a result of these injuries hospital management, safety and health representatives and employees assessed their trolleys and found that those with manually operated headboards and sides that can fall unrestrained are a risk to the safety and health of patients and employees.

Factors

1. If the drop side of the trolley is released unexpectedly it falls at a rapid rate.
2. If the headboard is required to be raised manually, this creates a manual-handling problem for the user.

Recommendations

1. Such trolleys be modified to eliminate the risk of the side dropping unexpectedly.
2. The headboards of such trolleys be modified so that the raising and lowering of the headboard is achieved by mechanical means or by using a hydraulic system.
3. If 1 and 2 above are not possible then this type of patient trolley be withdrawn and replaced with a safer and more ergonomically acceptable trolley. Ergonomic guidelines on trolley loads and forces, trolley design, castor design and trolley use, maintenance and training should be followed.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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