

STUDENT HANDOUT

A Case Example: Assisting a Patient to Mobilize with Oxygen in Acute Care

Ms. Jackson lives in an assisted living residence and is 87 years old. She receives assistance with housekeeping and meals, which are taken in the common dining room. She has a history of COPD and uses a four-wheeled walker. The walker is outfitted with a portable oxygen tank for use in the dining room, as well as for outings into the community.

Twelve days ago, Ms. Jackson had a fall in her home getting up to go to the bathroom at night. As a result of the fall, she fractured her hip and required a dynamic hip screw surgery. She is now recovering in acute care and is being encouraged to mobilize daily. Her goal is to be walking independently with her four-wheeled walker, so that she is able to walk the 75 feet necessary to get to the dining room when she gets home. When walking, she is permitted to put her full weight, as tolerated, on her operated side. She is currently using 2.0 L of oxygen by nasal prongs. She is mobilizing with a two-wheeled walker and requires stand by assistance for safety. As the HCA, you have been asked to assist Ms. Jackson with her mobilization routine, which involves walking up and down the hospital corridor.

The six steps below highlight some factors to consider.

1. Confirm Instructions

- Determine who is asking you to complete this mobilization: the Registered Nurse (RN), the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), the Physiotherapist (PT), or the Occupational Therapist (OT). Determine the method to communicate should problems or issues arise.
- Consider if you have the training or experience to complete this task. Have you ever assisted someone with a two-wheeled walker and oxygen? If not, you may need to ask for assistance and guidance.
- Clarify the distance you are expected to assist with walking. Are there any breaks to be planned into the walk? If so, where? How does this line up with Ms. Jackson's treatment goals at discharge (working towards ability to walk the 75 feet at home).
- Ask if there are any specific details or techniques you should be reinforcing? (e.g., proper technique with a two-wheeled walker or positioning of the oxygen tank).

2. Gather Information

- Look in the patient chart, nursing flow sheets, and/or walking board to see how Ms. Jackson did with her mobilizing on the previous shift. Was any additional assistance required? Did she sleep well? Did she have any confusion?
- Confirm current weight bearing status (full weight bearing) as well as expected oxygen delivery method. Does she have any movement precautions?
- Ask nursing staff if there are any medications required prior to mobilizing that may increase Ms. Jackson's comfort while walking.
- See if Ms. Jackson has any other scheduled appointments that may conflict with her ability to complete mobilization at a certain time (e.g., medical imaging, group activity sessions).

3. Perform Activity

- Have a member of the health care team check the oxygen delivery system (how it is applied, the rate of flow to the portable tank) and Ms. Jackson's status prior to ambulating.
- Complete a pre-handling checklist (or other pre-mobility assessment) to determine if Ms. Jackson is safe to ambulate. Health care team members can assist with this.
- Ensure oxygen tubing (or other lines and tubes) does not pose a tripping hazard, but still has enough slack to allow for ease of movement. Depending on the portable oxygen tank, it may or may not be attached to the walker. Assist as necessary.

4. Observe Responses

- Look for any of the following during the activity:
 - Signs of distress or discomfort
 - Signs of infection
 - Signs of change in anticipated performance level

5. Report

- Report back to the health care team member who requested that you assist with the mobilization.
- Provide information regarding such factors as distance travelled, any observed changes in comfort or performance and any assistance offered to Ms. Jackson for handling the oxygen delivery system and/or mobility equipment.

6. Record

- Depending on the unit, there may be specific locations where you record that you completed the mobilization and any observed responses. Examples may be a walking communication clipboard or whiteboard, the patient chart, or a flow sheet.

Evaluate your performance and consider the following:

- What worked well?
- What didn't work? Why? How would you approach this type of situation differently in the future?
- Are there any areas where you may need to seek additional support? Who could you speak to get this support?