

Reducing the risk to health professionals

■ Putting safety first

It is essential that when moving and handling a patient's leg; measures are taken to minimise the risks to both the health professional and the patient.

For example, a procedure performed manually or mechanically using a tool that has been developed in-house, may lead to staff experiencing musculoskeletal symptoms and the patient suffering discomfort.

■ The Leg Support System

Thankfully there is a much needed solution to this problem with a new powered leg support system - available from Salitas; based in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire.

For application in operating theatres and hospital wards, the stainless steel system mechanically lifts and supports the patient's leg. This allows the health professional to carry out a clinical procedure with less risk of musculoskeletal symptoms and encourages faster patient recovery as it holds the leg in a safe position.

Sue Barton, creator of the leg support system and Risk Management Facilitator and Educator at the University of Bradford's School of Health Studies, said:

"My role involves reducing the risks facing the health professional. The idea of the support system came from teaching the students. They all - irrespective of profession - highlighted the problems associated with the lifting of a patient's leg. The idea was further developed in collaboration with colleagues and co-inventors at the School of Engineering, Design and Technology."



— The Leg Support System

■ Reducing the risk

Richard Wilson, Managing Director of Salitas, said: “The research conducted in relation to the creation of the leg support system, underpins its great effectiveness. The ‘holding of a leg’ is recognised as being a high risk maneuver, but the extent to which anyone had ever measured the risk of manually handling a leg was unknown.”

“Therefore, the University of Bradford conducted studies which were able to demonstrate that the use of a mechanical device to perform the procedure significantly reduces the risk by lowering the amount of stress to the muscles of the lower back. These studies also took into account the issue of patient comfort. To ensure quality patient care it is desirable that the weight of the leg is suspended from the thigh and that the knee is held in the least risk position – slightly flexed.”

■ Meeting demands

The new powered leg support system builds on the design of the University’s School of Health Studies and Engineering Design and Technology’s plaster room leg suspension system – also available from Salitas. This non-automated plaster room system was developed in close collaboration with health professionals working in the plaster room environment. The aim was to produce a mechanical device that would reduce the physical risk to the health professional and increase patient comfort.

Sue Barton said: “The new powered system was developed in response to high demand from operating theatres where the lifting of a patient’s leg for long periods of time is a common procedure. By holding workshops with a variety of health professionals, working in partnership with an engineering team and visiting operating theatres and hospital wards; we were able to create the new system to improve working practice and reduce physical risk.”

■ Salitas - Providing solutions

The leg support sling - useable with both systems - is light-weight, resistant to chlorine-based cleaning agents and has a wipe down surface. The suspension stand is capable of working equally well as a stand alone product for use in the suspension of drips and monitors - above or close to the patient - and has a small foot print; allowing for flexibility of use.

Salitas is a company committed to developing innovations in modern health care. The company is currently involved in an extensive research and development programme for a range of products designed to improve treatment and aid recovery.



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