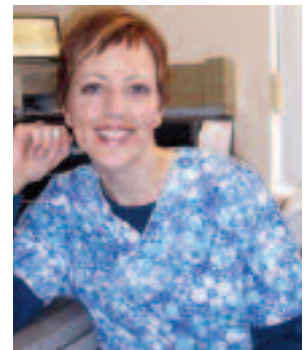




Putting Incontinence Products to the Test

By Dahn Kendall, RN



Nursing homes are faced with increasing costs every day. Not too surprisingly, one of the top three expenditures is incontinence products. For most facilities, the pressure to reduce costs is a balancing act. Some hope they can manage their incontinence budget by buying cheaper products. Others are fearful of sacrificing the quality of resident care. HarmarVillage Care Center, a Grane Healthcare facility in Cheswick, Pa., recently went through the process of evaluating disposable incontinence products. They've shared their experience with us for this edition of *Healthy Skin*.

When to rock the boat

Beth Lengle, RN, is VP of Nursing Services for Grane Healthcare. She receives daily messages from vendors pitching “new and improved” products. If Beth feels the products have the potential for increasing the quality of care while remaining cost effective, she will open a conversation with the vendor. Nevertheless, before making any major changes, Grane Healthcare conducts a minimum 30-day trial on the proposed products to work out any kinks before rolling out the products companywide.



Beth Lengle, RN, Grane Healthcare VP of Nursing Services

Trialing incontinence

Recently, Beth conducted a trial for an adult brief – a trial that could ultimately affect all 11 Grane facilities. According to Beth, Grane Healthcare typically uses HarmarVillage Care Center as the location for trials because the facility is geographically close to the corporate office and the staff is very stable.

The high acuity of residents in the memory-impaired and ventilator units also makes HarmarVillage a good test site.

Have a plan

Clinical trials within the Grane system are performed using this standardized format:

1. Select a resident sample
2. Notify family with details and duration of the trial
3. Involve physicians to obtain orders, if applicable
4. Educate staff prior to the trial
5. Document residents’ outcomes often – perhaps every shift during the trial if it makes sense
6. Analyze the data

Set the bar high

Linda Imm, RN, director of nursing, believes that “successful trials are attributed to the teamwork of the staff, all working toward better outcomes for our residents! We choose a unit and a small group of staff who give us regular reliable feedback. Grane Healthcare sets the standards high. We will terminate a trial with any negative resident outcomes.”

Recent trials for beds, NPWT (negative pressure wound therapy), bathing and skincare lines have resulted in adding products that provide better care for residents while recognizing cost.



Linda Imm, RN, director of nursing

Begin with education, continue with evaluation

“Education is the first component of most trials,” Linda notes. “Make sure the staff is comfortable with how the product is used. Also, for the adult incontinence brief trial, we started out with skin assessments for each of the residents on the unit to provide a basis for comparison. Critical to most trials, especially the incontinence product trials, is vendor participation. The sales rep and/or nurse need to be available to help evaluate and re-evaluate. Our incontinence product vendor provided an incontinence specialist and an RN who assisted with the skin assessments and the sizing and fitting of each resident. Both were present for constant follow-up in the first two weeks. They were terrific!”

Trials result in confidence

Having implemented the Grane Healthcare standardized approach for trialing incontinence products, HarmarVillage staff are convinced that the incontinence products they chose have contributed to healthy skin for their residents. Linda believes that using clinical trials as part of a product selection process results in staff confidence that they have struck the right balance between cost savings, product performance and quality care for their residents.

About the Author

Dahn Kendall, RN, Clinical Service Manager. Dahn received her degree in nursing from Catonsville College in Baltimore, MD. She has over 21 years of nursing experience which includes 17 years of acute care and 4 years of long term care. Dahn has worked as a clinical consultant for several large companies with emphasis on education and conducting clinical trials for various medical devices. Currently Dahn provides clinical support, education and expertise in the area of incontinence management to promote survey compliance.



I strongly encourage clinical trials on site for new or critical products. In addition to seeing first-hand how well a product works, it gives our staff the opportunity to be part of the evaluation and decision-making process, which improves compliance."

Gregg Hall
HarmarVillage Care Center administrator



Clinical trials allow me to be proactive in choosing the best products for our residents."

Amanda Linderman
LPN, wound care manager
HarmarVillage Care Center



Prior to trial, Gregg, Amanda and Linda review the features of the new product.