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Floor-Level Beds: A Proven Solution for Fall Prevention

WHITE PAPER



Overview

Falls are a leading concern in long-term care, with nearly 50% of nursing home residents experiencing at least one fall annually. 10% of residents who fall will suffer serious injury, including 65,000 hip fractures each year. These incidents not only threaten resident safety and well-being but also place a significant financial and emotional burden on care facilities and staff. Fall-related injuries cost U.S. healthcare providers over \$50 billion each year, and for long-term care providers, the associated legal and operational challenges compound the issue.

One effective approach to addressing this ongoing challenge is the adoption of floor-level beds. Unlike standard low beds, which lower to a minimum height of 7 to 10 inches, floor-level beds lower to just 3.9 inches, offering a game changing reduction in fall risk. By minimizing the distance to the ground, these beds significantly enhance resident safety while supporting caregivers in providing compassionate, efficient care. This white paper explores the role of floor-level beds in advancing fall prevention efforts, with a focus on the Alesso Bed by Kwalu—a thoughtfully designed solution that prioritizes resident safety and operational efficiency.



The Financial and Operational Impact of Falls, the True Cost of Injuries

Falls in long-term care facilities impose a substantial financial burden on care providers. A study conducted at a State Veterans' Home in Oregon revealed that the average cost of a single fall with injury is \$5,267. Over the span of one year, 92 such incidents resulted in a total cost of \$484,000. This figure likely underestimates the actual economic impact, as it does not account for the full scope of legal fees, penalties, or potential litigation costs.

Beyond the Financial Costs

The consequences of falls extend beyond financial implications, affecting the quality of life for residents. Falls often lead to reduced confidence and an increased fear of falling, which can further accelerate physical and emotional decline. Elderly residents, particularly those in unfamiliar environments or experiencing cognitive challenges, may overestimate their physical abilities, placing themselves at greater risk. Additionally, some residents may be hesitant to seek assistance, compounding the challenges caregivers face in mitigating fall risks.

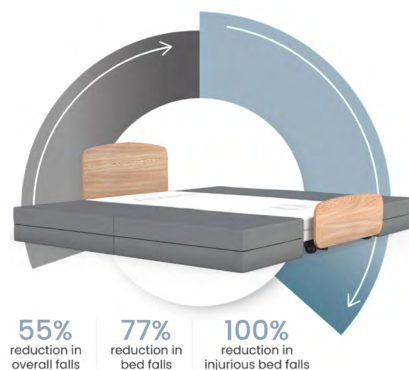
Facilities must adopt innovative solutions that not only reduce the incidence of falls but also respect the dignity and independence of their residents. Attorney Michael Bredva underscores the legal and ethical responsibility of care facilities, stating, “Nursing homes have a legal duty to stop residents from falling. Failing to stop preventable falls is a form of negligence, and the results can be deadly.”

Impact of Falls

Residents	Facility
Reduced quality of life	Increased paperwork for staff
Increased fear of falling and restriction of activities	Increased levels of care required for fallers
Decreased ability to function	Poor survey results
Serious injuries	Lawsuits
Increased risk of death	High insurance premiums

The Evidence for Floor-Level Beds: Masonic Villages Study

A 2022 clinical study at the Masonic Villages of Pennsylvania evaluated the impact of floor-level beds on fall prevention and injury reduction. Twenty high-fall-risk residents participated in the study. During a three-month period using traditional low beds, residents experienced 58 falls, 26 of which were bed-related. In the subsequent three months, after transitioning to floor-level beds paired with high-safety mats, the total number of falls decreased to 32, with only 6 being bed-related. Most importantly, no injuries occurred during bed falls in the second phase.



Nicole Watson, Director of Nursing at the time of the study, highlighted the results: “Our overall number of falls went down by 55%, and we had zero injuries from bed falls. These results really exemplify what the bed can do for our residents.”

Projected Financial Savings

According to a 2023 study published in the Journal of American Medical Directors Association, “In 18 prospective studies addressing older adults living in nursing home, the pooled incidence of falls was 43%. Therefore, in a 100-bed facility, 43 residents could be at a high risk of falling. Extrapolating from the Masonic Villages study, the cost savings of preventing injurious bed falls are substantial, exceeding \$271,00 annually. By implementing floor-level beds like the Alesso, facilities could potentially eliminate these costs while significantly improving resident safety and care outcomes.

The Alesso Bed: A Thoughtful Solution

The Alesso Bed by Kwalu is a floor-level solution with a height range of 3.9 to 29.5 inches, designed to enhance resident safety and support caregiver efficiency. Its features accommodate a variety of care needs while reducing fall risks and promoting ease of use. Its innovative features include:

- Ultra-low height of 3.9 inches to minimize fall severity.
- Vertical lift system that ensures smooth height adjustments without requiring additional floor space, unlike scissor-lift beds.
- Durable construction engineered for longevity in high-use environments, resulting in a lower total cost of ownership.
- Optional high-safety mats that align with the mattress height, integrating seamlessly with the bed allows the opportunity to declassify “falls” where they can be defined as a lateral transfer (roll or crawl) onto the mat rather than a fall by descent to the floor. This may have a positive impact on statutory reporting, reduced staff administration that takes time away from resident care and improve resident and family confidence.

Conclusion

Falls in long-term care facilities pose a significant challenge with far-reaching consequences for residents, caregivers, and care providers. The adoption of floor-level beds represents a meaningful step forward in reducing fall risks and improving care quality.

The Alesso Bed by Kwalu is a proven, innovative solution that empowers long-term care providers to enhance resident safety, support caregivers, and reduce operational costs. By investing in floor-level beds, facilities can create safer, more dignified environments for their residents while achieving measurable improvements in safety and financial outcomes.

Citations

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