

Falls Escape Room Simulation Created to Improve Veteran Safety and Care

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(Grouping of team puzzle boards posted in the Simulation Lab hallway following the two-day escape room event. Photography by Morgan Graff)

Falls can cause broken bones, excessive bleeding, and even death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports one out of five falls can cause serious injuries which can make it hard for a person to do everyday activities or live on their own. In 2021, falls became a sentinel event, also known as a patient safety issue which results in death, permanent harm, or severe temporary harm (The Joint Commission, 2022). In caring for our nation's Veterans, one fall is too many.

The Cincinnati VA Medical Center (CVAMC) completed a review of all facility falls in 2021 which revealed 173 incidents and an opportunity for innovative staff training. Safe Patient Handling and Mobility (SPHM) Facility Coordinator Janette Perry and Simulation Program Manager Morgan Graff began collaborating on ways to engage staff and present fall prevention concepts. A nonlinear escape room format was selected as a training modality. Gamification strategies such as escape rooms have been found to stimulate critical thinking skills, promote team collaboration, and bring excitement to learning (Tassemeyer et al., 2021).

CVAMC fall data was examined and categorized based on what Veteran patients were doing at the time they fell. It was found that reaching for items was linked to over 10% of all falls in 2021. This category became a focus of the escape room because reaching for items had not been the topic of previous proactive intervention. A list of ten top fall hazards were agreed upon for the escape room including unanswered call lights, personal item placement, and out of reach assistive devices.

During the development stage, adhesive puzzle pieces and puzzle boards were created by the medical media team. Placement of puzzle pieces in the simulated patient environment were determined by correlating each piece to one of the ten identified fall hazards. Some puzzle pieces were placed thoughtfully near fall risks while others were located within lock boxes accessed using knowledge of SPHM and clues in the room. A countdown clock, tackle boxes, various locks, and blue light supplies were utilized to enhance the sensory experience.

The initial roll out of the Falls Escape Room aligned with the grand reopening of the CVAMC Simulation Lab. This served a dual purpose to engage staff in simulation and promote Veteran safety. Staff were encouraged to sign up in 3-person teams or to enroll individually to be placed in an interdisciplinary group. At the time of training, learners were given a pre-briefing including a short SPHM video. Groups then had 20 minutes to escape the room. A standardized patient positioned in the bed served as a realistic environmental distractor. After completing the escape room, groups moved into debriefing to discuss what they experienced and key takeaway points. The Falls Escape Room event occurred over two days in April 2022. A total of 15 teams composed of 44 employees participated in the event.

Participants rated the learning activity 94.48 out of 100 for its ability to increase their confidence in identifying fall hazards within a patient care environment. Qualitative feedback included values of team communication and surveying patient care environments for safety concerns. Since the event, there have been requests for continued escape room opportunities. The Dayton VA Simulation Team participated in the Falls Escape Room and saw value to incorporate the training into new employee orientation. The CVAMC will add the activity to SPHM employee education beginning in October 2023. The setting for the initial Fall Escape Room was in an inpatient room, but future iterations will include outpatient facilities, community living centers, and home settings to tailor trainings to learner needs. Overall, the Falls Escape Room successfully presented patient safety concepts in a new format by bringing attention to fall hazards, promoting staff engagement, and fostering teambuilding through gamification.

References

Tassemeyer, D. , Rowland, S. & Barnason, S. (2021). Building a Nursing Escape Room. *Nurse Educator*, 46 (5), 271-272. doi: 10.1097/NNE.0000000000000987.

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