

# Keeping treatment tables safe.

No one sets out to have a patient injured in their care. When it does happen, it can be distressing for you and the patient. People come to you for help; they don't expect to be injured in the process.

We often receive reports relating to patient injuries involving treatment tables.

These claim examples highlight how easily incidents can happen.

## Case 1

A man broke his arm when he fell from a treatment table. He was lying face down on the table when the practitioner asked him to sit up. As he sat up, he tried to steady himself by putting his feet on the floor. However, he didn't realise the table had been raised during his treatment. He then overbalanced, putting his arm out in an attempt to break his fall.

## Case 2

An elderly woman fell when getting off a treatment table unaided. She landed heavily on her knees, causing extensive

swelling and bruising. The practitioner hadn't thought to caution her about getting up too quickly or to help her when getting off the table.

## Reducing the risk

### Working with patients

- > Be alert to the risk during every consultation. It's not uncommon for patients to behave in a way you don't expect; don't assume they will act safely.
- > Ensure the treatment table is positioned at the lowest setting before the patient enters the room.
- > Where you consider it may be required, provide the patient with assistance to get on and off the table.
- > Remind patients they may feel dizzy when sitting up. Encourage them not to rush.
- > Instruct patients to not reach out to grab personal items, such as mobile phones, while on the table.

- > Be mindful of the role patient modesty plays in preventing these incidents. An individual who feels uncomfortable being treated in their underwear may move quickly off the table to get dressed again.
- > Be careful when you sit down at the treatment table so you don't accidentally release the levers underneath. This can cause parts of the table, such as the headpiece, to drop or move suddenly.
- > Consider how a patient's size and weight may impact the stability of the table, particularly when the height is raised.
- > Don't allow children to play on, or under, the table. There have been reports of children being crushed to death by treatment tables.
- > When treating children, instruct the parent to hold their child on the table at all times.
- > Ensure all staff are educated about the safe use of treatment tables.

## Maintaining or purchasing treatment tables

- > Reduce clutter and remove hazards from around the treatment area. Keep equipment or other objects away from the foot switch to avoid accidentally activating the pedal.
- > Think about the age and suitability of your current table(s). Is it suitable for safely treating all of your patients?
- > Anchor the table to the floor if possible.
- > Ensure the table is secure and sits level on the floor. Keep any wheels locked at all times. Avoid moving the table unnecessarily to prevent inadvertently leaving the wheels unlocked.
- > Adhere to the manufacturer's instructions and ensure staff are familiar with it.
- > Regularly clean and service the table according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- > When purchasing a new table, consider the:
  - > maximum weight it can safely accommodate
  - > degree of stability the table maintains as the height is raised
  - > infection control risks and the ease with which it can be cleaned
  - > importance of securely anchoring the table to the floor
  - > other safety considerations relevant to your practice.



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