



American Trauma Society

TRAUMA AWARENESS MONTH – MAY 2007

FALLS AND THE ELDERLY

Trauma Awareness Month this year will focus on the major cause of trauma to senior Americans: Falls. Everyday an estimated 8000 people turn 60 and by 2012 nearly 10,000 people a day will turn 65. The greatest risk of injury for seniors is Falls. As trauma care providers, ATS members witness this daily. More and more seniors fill our trauma beds due to injuries sustained due to falls. Unlike younger Americans, falls to seniors can produce life-changing consequences. They can rob a senior victim of his or her independence. Falls for them can lead to death.

Like all injuries, if they are foreseeable, they can be prevented. Simple steps can be taken, changes adopted in a person's life style, to reduce the risk of falls.

Beginning in May, National Trauma Awareness Month, ATS will begin a major emphasis to educate senior Americans and those who love them and care for them, how to reduce the risk of falling.

ATS has partnered with the Home Safety Council and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and is providing its institutional members materials that can be used in their communities to do a local campaign on falls.

Materials will include:

- Home Safety Checklist
- What you can do to prevent falls
- Check For Safety
- About Injury Prevention and Older People
- Draft Press Release
- Safe Steps: Falls Prevention for Seniors Program with DVD
- Bookmark: National Trauma Awareness Month
- Guide for Inviting Legislators and Policy Makers
- Falls Among Older Adults: An Overview; In Nursing Homes and Hip Fractures; Cost of Falls

ATS has a falls prevention program called "***Watch Your Step.***" This excellent program was developed by the ATS Pennsylvania Division. This program normally sells for \$200. For the next 60 days this will be available to ATS institutional members for \$125.

In addition to our program for Falls and Seniors, we also are enclosing our guide to inviting your legislators and policy makers to visit you – get a tour of your facility, and give you the opportunity to educate them about trauma and the service you do for the community. The US House of Representatives and the Senate have recently passed a bill to reauthorize the Trauma Systems Development Act. The President is expected to sign the bill into law. Now we must urge the Congress to fund this program. We urge you to e-mail your representatives to support funding for this program. More will be sent to you about this.

We hope you have a successful campaign on Prevention of Falls.

Best wishes,

Harry Teter
Executive Director

Enclosures

TRAUMA AWARENESS MONTH – 07

Press Release for Institutions

Falls are the leading cause of injury to America's senior citizens. (Your facility) will join with the American Trauma Society, the Home Safety Council and the Centers for Disease Control, in a campaign to eliminate falls in (your town).

Falls can be devastating to seniors, causing life style changes, loss of independence, and can lead to death.

Falls are often preventable. (Your hospital) emphasized the following for senior Americans' Homes:

- Daily exercise – to maintain balance, strength and flexibility
- Grab Bars in bathrooms
- Non-skid rugs
- Handrails on stairs
- Wear thin, non-slip soles shoes
- Review Medications

(Your facility) will have a home check list for seniors and those who love and care for them, to make a safer home.

HOW TO INVITE AND HOST LEGISLATORS

A tour of your facility with a short briefing on your trauma service and your prevention activities can be invaluable to your facility as well as to the national trauma cause. Here are some steps that might be helpful in arranging this visit:

1. Arrange with your hospital administrator or whoever is the proper authority to oversee government relations. You do not want any 'surprises' to your administration when a legislator shows up and he does not know about it!
2. Make the invitation as soon as possible so the legislator can get it on his or her calendar. For a congressperson (Senators and Representatives) you should contact his or her home office as well as his Washington office. For state or local public officials you can find local addresses. Contact ATS headquarters if you need assistance on whom to contact and the address.
3. Once a date has been set up you can begin arranging the tour of your facility
4. Have some literature about your institution as well as the trauma service and what trauma is about. This is an excellent hand out and something for your guests to keep and have as a reference. We can provide you general information on trauma if you need this. Give him or her an ATS gold tulip pin. We will supply you with what you need.
5. Remember you have one Congressional Representative and two Senators. Invite each one and include their staffs.
6. Prepare your message points. (Ex: Needs of Trauma at your institution and in the nation, need for national attention to trauma, how you respond to mass casualties)
7. Make a presentation on your center's community-based injury prevention programs. Show your contribution to the community both for quality care and prevention.
8. Have specific directions as to where they should come and be sure there is a welcoming group.
9. Know ahead of time how much time they will have and stick to a schedule
10. Be sure you know the names of any aides or staff members that might accompany the legislator.
11. Prepare a press release of the visit and submit it to the newspaper along with a photo.
12. Have a photographer and capture the moment! A photo opportunity helps everyone. The congressperson gets a picture in the local newspaper (good for his or her community relations and reelection!) and you get a souvenir. We will publish it in the Traumagram.

This can be a great occasion for all concerned. Seize the Moment

