

Custom contoured lying supports

Kieran Cheer, Consolor Ltd

Summary

Modular off-the-shelf lying supports are adjustable, and require a great deal of knowledge and practice in order that they are used correctly and effectively. Conversely a custom-made, moulded mattress or modular support could be more appropriate and provide an easier to use and more repeatable solution.

Aims & Objectives

To provide a full body postural support for use in bed - profiling or standard, in lying positions - supine or side lying. To be used easily, with minimal training, in multi-carer situations. To offer a secure and contained postural position to keep the client in the required position for a whole night's sleep, without separate parts moving out of position.

Background

Consolor is fully supportive of the provision and use of night time lying supports as part of a 24-hour postural management programme. We are however aware of the requirements of training of carers, subsequent skills needed in use, time involved in setting up, and maintenance of a support system through the night of some off-the-shelf systems. We wanted to, and have been asked to, make supports that would require minimal maintenance and training, and additionally provide secure and repeatable support throughout the night.

Technique

A full postural assessment was carried out for the clients so that I could understand their posture in both lying and sitting. Subsequently a full understanding of the clients' postures was gained along with an understanding of the goals that were hoped would be achieved through the integration of the equipment. A large vacuum moulding mattress was then used to mould the clients in order to capture their shape and to temporarily provide support in the required places to support them, and to give them the best possibility of staying in the chosen position during the night.

Standards/guidelines

A risk assessment is carried out for every client when being assessed/provided with a contoured lying support. A multi-disciplinary team approach is used in order that everyone can be in agreement of the goals and adopt the same approach to moving and handling, and postural management.

Clinical detail

The supports provided aimed to improve, support and protect postural shape in a lying position, and to secure the body comfortably in order to promote relaxed posture. Additionally, night time feeding tubes were used, and these could become tangled and dangerous. The advice being given for their use is that the head end of the bed is elevated, in order to elevate the trunk of the client and reduce the risk of choking on the feed.

Results and Testing

We have made a number of these supports now and, although relatively low in numbers, every support issued has been well received. They have all proved successful in their use in real situations and solved the problems they were aiming to solve.

Discussion

There are various off-the shelf CE marked, lying supports/positioning systems on the market. Like all specialist equipment they depend upon a certain amount of skill and training for their correct usage. This often involves numerous parts being fitted around the client in the correct manner in order that they are effective. Once these separate parts are in place, they are only effective if they stay in the correct place during the time of using the equipment. They may need repositioning and, therefore, so may the client.

We have been approached where off-the-shelf equipment has been used but not worked in situ for a number of reasons: separate parts not being placed in the correct position around the client, individual parts moving out of position, whole support not being strong enough to stay in place and keep a client in place. We wanted to make supports that would be simpler to use and more effective in their use, in order to hold the person in position for a longer period of time throughout the night. A custom-made support would involve a very thorough assessment in order for the correct shape to be produced in the support, and offer little adjustment to accommodate change of body shape over time, therefore unlikely to be suitable for children and more ideally suited to adults.

Bibliography

The Chailey Approach to Postural Management. TE Pountney, CM Mulcahy, SM Clarke, EM Green
Postural Care: Protecting Body Shape. John Goldsmith, Liz Goldsmith, Polly Mears, Anna Waugh