

# Module #13 – Patient Safety

## Introduction

Ensuring patient safety is always the most important responsibility assigned to the home care aide. All patients have the basic right to feel safe and to be safe. This module will discuss multiple factors that may create safety concerns for the individuals that we serve and will provide insight and education to the home care aide so that patient safety is improved. You will also be introduced to caregiver burnout and patient abuse. These two factors can impact patient safety.

## Objectives

At the end of the module, the nurse aide will be able to:

1. Identify common causes of home accidents and safety measures that could prevent home accidents
2. Explain the role of the home care aide in fall prevention and how to respond to falls
3. Explain equipment related accidents and the role of the home care aide in preventing those accidents
4. Identify signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout
5. Identify various forms of abuse
6. Explain what to do in the case of suspected abuse of a patient

## Instructional Resource Materials

- PowerPoint for Module #13 – Patient Safety
- Handouts /Activities
- Other activities to consider: guest speaker from your local fire department or guest speaker from your local Department of Social Services, Adult Protective Services Unit or Child Protective Services, physical therapist or occupational therapist who works in home care; encourage therapist to bring and demonstrate common equipment.

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Slides	Instructor's Script	Notes
<b>Slide 1</b> Title Slide	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 13 – Patient Safety</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 2</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Objectives</b> - At the end of the module, the nurse aide will be able to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify common causes of home accidents and safety measures that could prevent home accidents</li> <li>2. Explain the role of the home care aide in fall prevention and responding to falls</li> <li>3. Explain equipment related accidents and the role of the home care aide in preventing those accidents</li> <li>4. Identify signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout</li> <li>5. Identify various forms of abuse</li> <li>6. Explain what to do in the case of suspected abuse of a patient</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 3</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 13-A – Fall Prevention and Response</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 4</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falls are the most common type of accident for the elderly home care patient. There are many factors that can contribute to falls.</li> <li>• There may be environmental issues, such as stairs (especially carpeted stairs), cluttered rooms, items on the floor, or wet floors in the kitchen or bathroom. The patient may have medical conditions and/or medications that make them more susceptible to falls as well.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 5</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handout #1 – CDC Falls Fact Sheet</b></li> <li>• Review handout – good statistics and information regarding falls</li> <li>• <b>Faculty – refer to <a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a> for updated falls data annually</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 6</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handout #2 – Falls: Quick Facts!</b></li> <li>• Review handout for more information and statistics</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 7</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some safety measures that help prevent falls?</li> <li>• The home care aide can assist the patient in many ways to assist with fall prevention.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be sure there is adequate lighting in rooms, halls, and bathrooms</li> <li>○ Put night-lights in bedrooms, halls, and bathrooms</li> <li>○ Do not use wax on floors when cleaning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have patient wear gripper socks</li> <li>○ Ensure that electrical cords are out of the way</li> <li>○ Put a telephone next to the patient's bed</li> <li>○ Be sure patient is wearing nonskid shoes or slippers, and that clothing does not hang down too low or drag on the floor</li> <li>○ Ensure that crutches, canes, and/or walkers have nonskid tips</li> <li>○ Check to make sure wheelchair brakes work properly</li> <li>○ If the patient has company, check to make sure they did not move any of the devices that the patient needs to remain stable</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 8</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As well as falls, home care patients could become victims of other types of household accidents.</li> <li>● Fires and burns cause great damage in the home, and death can come from smoke inhalation and asphyxiation, falls related to the fire/burn, or trauma from falling objects.</li> <li>● Electrical wiring problems and faulty appliances are often to blame, especially space heaters. Patients at highest risk of fire/burn related injuries or death are the young (under age 4) and the elderly (over age 75).</li> <li>● To avoid fire/burn accidents, it would be helpful to remind your patients of some important safety tips:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be sure there are smoke detectors on each floor of the home.</li> <li>○ Do not overload electrical outlets and never use an appliance if the cord is fraying.</li> <li>○ Turn handles of pots on stoves so they do not point outward, where someone could bump or knock the pot over.</li> <li>○ Practice smoking safety – never smoke in bed and never smoke if someone in the house is using oxygen. Also, be sure cigarettes or cigars are fully extinguished and cooled in an ashtray before putting in a trash can.</li> <li>○ If someone in the house is using oxygen, be sure appliances are turned off before unplugging them.</li> <li>○ Take care with space heaters – if they are knocked over, they could start a fire.</li> <li>○ Measure the temperature of the bath water – this is especially important for patients with paralysis.</li> <li>○ Supervise meals, especially if the patient is eating hot food in bed or lying down.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 9</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Home care aides can also try to assist with the prevention of poisoning.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be sure that all medicine is labeled properly. Old or expired medicine should be discarded properly.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Patients should be clear about how to take their medications. As a home care aide, you can assist your patient by reading their prescription instructions and making sure they understand the directions. Accidental overdosing can occur if a patient is forgetful or has dementia, has poor vision, or has a compromising health condition.</li> <li>○ Be sure all household cleaners are labeled and stored away from where children could reach them.</li> <li>○ Also, store medicine and potentially toxic materials in their original containers.</li> <li>○ Keep poisonous houseplants out of reach of children and pets.</li> <li>○ Never call medicine candy.</li> <li>○ Keep emergency phone numbers by the phone and/or on the refrigerator – police, ambulance, hospital, fire department, poison control, etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 10</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas that can cause illness or death. Carbon monoxide poisoning could occur if a furnace is not vented properly, a chimney is clogged, or if there is a running car in a closed garage.</li> <li>● Be sure to discuss this hazard with your patient if they have a furnace, chimney, or garage.</li> <li>● Symptoms include dizziness, headache, drowsiness, nausea, or flu-like symptoms.</li> <li>● Home care aides can encourage patients to get a carbon monoxide detector for their home.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 11</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Handout #3 – Home Safety Assessment</b></li> <li>● Review this handout – these are good examples of things to look for when at a patient’s home, or even in your own home.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 12</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Activity #1 – How Many Hazards Can You Spot?</b></li> <li>● Have students get into small groups. Have each group find as many hazards as they can. Come back together and explain why each is a hazard as a class.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 13</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Module 13-B – Equipment Safety</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 14</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Safely using equipment with a patient can aide in reducing accidents and falls.</li> <li>● For example, if a patient uses a cane or walker, make sure all pieces are securely intact and that there are rubber tips in place to prevent slipping.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check to make sure wheelchair brakes work properly.</li> <li>• It is important that all patient equipment be sturdy, safe and in proper working order.</li> <li>• If you have a concern regarding any unsafe equipment, be sure to contact your supervisor.</li> <li>• Do not use equipment that you have a safety concern about until you discuss it with your supervisor.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 15</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some patients will use side rails on their beds. These protect the patient from falling out of bed and can be used to assist in turning over in bed.</li> <li>• If a patient takes a medication at night that causes drowsiness, the patient may use side rails as a protective measure.</li> <li>• Be sure rails lock properly and do not fall.</li> <li>• If you have a concern regarding any unsafe side rails or how the side rails are being used, be sure to contact your supervisor.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 16</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handrails and grab bars can assist the patient in maneuvering throughout their home or in the bathroom.</li> <li>• Handrails might be in hallways, stairways, and bathrooms.</li> <li>• Grab bars might be in or near the toilet and the tub/shower.</li> <li>• Check to make sure these are installed properly and are stable.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 17</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activity #2 – Case Scenarios</b></li> <li>• Have each student read and answer case scenarios or divide the class into small groups. Review answers out loud as a class. Discuss the scenarios.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 18</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activity #3 – Safety Concerns</b></li> <li>• Have the students complete the Safety Concern quiz and discuss the answers.</li> <li>• Have students produce their own safety concerns/good safety practices. Discuss as a group.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 19</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 13-C – Patient Abuse</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 20</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for any patient in any age group can be a challenge.</li> <li>• While the home care aide may be the only one in the home helping to care for the patient for a brief time,</li> </ul>	

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	<p>often a specific family member is there providing care at all other times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important for the home care aide to be aware of the signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout.</li> <li>• Caregiver burnout is more than feelings of stress. It encompasses the physical, emotional, and/or spiritual exhaustion that can seem to take over a person.</li> <li>• Caregiver burnout can affect one’s ability to experience personal joy or feel and care for others.</li> <li>• It often is a gradual lessening of sensitivity or compassion over time.</li> <li>• A few symptoms include hopelessness, anxiety, decreased pleasure in day-to-day life, and an apparent chronic negative attitude.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 21</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People carry burdens and stress in many ways.</li> <li>• Symptoms of caregiver burnout can have a gradual onset.</li> <li>• When caring for a patient, look for signs that the patient’s other/family caregivers may be feeling burned out. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complaints of feeling depressed</li> <li>○ Withdrawal or isolation from others</li> <li>○ Changes in eating patterns</li> <li>○ Changes in sleeping patterns</li> <li>○ Feelings of helplessness and guilt</li> <li>○ Increased use of stimulants and alcohol</li> <li>○ Excessive blaming</li> <li>○ Negative thinking</li> <li>○ Feelings of impatience and irritability</li> <li>○ Poor self-care</li> <li>○ Legal problems</li> <li>○ Difficulty concentrating or preoccupied</li> <li>○ Appearing mentally and physically tired</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Caregiver burnout is especially worrisome for the patient who is disabled.</li> <li>• Disabilities among all ages can be stressful and can be difficult for caregivers to adapt to.</li> <li>• If the home care aide has a patient whose caregivers are expressing some of these symptoms, it is important to report that to the RN supervisor. Caregiver burnout can affect the care that your patient is receiving, and the supervisor will have the resources to better help the other caregivers.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 22</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are times when patients become victims of abuse at the hands of their caregivers or family members.</li> <li>• Knowing the signs of abuse is important for the home care aide.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the home care aide observe or suspect abuse, speaking to the RN supervisor is the first step. The supervisor will help the home care aide through this process and take the necessary steps to try to resolve the issue.</li> <li>• Never report your concerns to the family or patient first. Should the home care aide be wrong, this could create a tense and hostile environment. Likewise, should the home care aide be correct, services may be discontinued, and the problem could worsen, as there is no one there to advocate for the patient anymore.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 23</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse happens most often where the patient lives.</li> <li>• Patients are often too frail or scared to speak up or fight back.</li> <li>• Physical abuse is extremely serious – signs cannot be ignored. Signs of physical abuse can include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bruises or discoloration (anywhere on the body)</li> <li>○ Thumb/fingerprints, choke marks</li> <li>○ Scratches, cuts, burns, fractures, etc.</li> <li>○ Unexplained bleeding (however, this may be normal if someone is taking a blood thinner)</li> <li>○ Physical restraints/rope or belt burns or marks (e.g. patient tied to the bed)</li> <li>○ Misuse of medication, either prescription or over the counter medications</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Due to intimidation and fear, a patient might be too scared to speak up regarding his or her possible physical abuse.</li> <li>• Signs to look for include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Caregiver’s refusal to let the patient be seen alone</li> <li>○ Expressed feelings of helplessness</li> <li>○ Implausible stories</li> <li>○ Hesitation to talk openly</li> <li>○ Unexplained injuries</li> <li>○ Depression</li> <li>○ Broken glasses or frames</li> <li>○ Appearing afraid of the caregiver</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 24</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causing an ill family member emotional pain or distress is also a form of abuse and can be damaging.</li> <li>• Emotional abuse can include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yelling at or intimidating the patient</li> <li>○ Humiliating or making fun of the patient</li> <li>○ Blaming the patient for all problems</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There are also non-verbal behaviors which can be emotionally damaging:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ignoring the patient</li> <li>○ Not letting the patient interact with others</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Emotional abuse can be confusing to a patient, as they may not even realize abuse is occurring.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warning signs include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The caregiver controlling or threatening the patient in front of others</li> <li>○ Dementia-related behaviors when there are no medical signs of dementia, including rocking, sucking, mumbling, or staring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 25</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neglect and abandonment can be issues for patients as well. Failing to fulfill the nurse aide role as a caretaker can lead to problems for the patient.</li> <li>• Signs of neglect include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stained or ripped clothes</li> <li>○ Poor dental hygiene</li> <li>○ Dirty or uncut finger or toenails</li> <li>○ Fecal matter or urine present on patient</li> <li>○ Malnutrition</li> <li>○ Dehydration</li> <li>○ Pressure ulcers (Bedsore)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A caregiver can neglect a patient, or the patient can also self-neglect.</li> <li>• Other signs include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Weight loss</li> <li>○ Untreated physical problems</li> <li>○ Unsafe living conditions</li> <li>○ Leaving the patient alone or unattended either at home or in a public place</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 26</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploiting an ill family member for financial purposes is also a form of abuse.</li> <li>• This can be either without the patient realizing it is happening or knowingly coercing them. Signs include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unauthorized use of funds or property</li> <li>○ Misuse of checks or credit cards</li> <li>○ Stealing money or household items</li> <li>○ Forging the patient’s signature for personal gain</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There are other suspicious signs to look out for:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sudden financial changes</li> <li>○ Changes in wills or power of attorney</li> <li>○ Additional names on the patient’s accounts or credit cards</li> <li>○ Unpaid bills or lack of medical care when the patient has enough to cover it</li> <li>○ Lack of personal care items such as soap, lotion, shampoo, washcloths, or towels when the patient can afford them</li> <li>○ Unnecessary services or subscriptions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 27</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfortunately, sexual abuse also happens to elderly and/or ill patients.</li> <li>• Signs of sexual abuse to watch for in patients are:</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bruises around breasts or genitals</li> <li>○ Vaginal or anal bleeding</li> <li>○ Sexually transmitted diseases or infections</li> <li>○ Bloody or torn undergarments</li> <li>● Sexual abuse may not only involve inappropriate contact with the patient. It can also include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Showing the patient pornographic materials</li> <li>○ Forcing the patient to watch sex acts</li> <li>○ Forcing the patient to undress</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 28</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is important for the home care aide to be aware of what is happening in the patient’s home that may be affecting the patient’s well-being and care.</li> <li>● In many states, medical personnel, social workers, nursing home workers, etc., are mandated to report <i>any</i> suspected abuse.</li> <li>● If a home care aide feels that some sort of abuse is happening in the patient’s home, the first step is to talk to a supervisor.</li> <li>● Different states have different rules as far as who should do the reporting, and a supervisor can assist with this process.</li> <li>● In most cases, the local <b>Adult Protective Services (APS)</b> or <b>Child Protective Services (CPS)</b> department will be called.</li> <li>● After reporting the suspected abuse to APS or CPS, they determine whether they will follow through on the claim.</li> <li>● Suspicions, and your call to APS or CPS, should be documented thoroughly, in case more details are needed or if the case is accepted and further investigation is needed.</li> <li>● Again, if you do suspect abuse, do not confront, or accuse your patient’s family member(s).</li> <li>● For the safety of your patient, it is important to let people who are trained in these matters deal with it appropriately.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 29</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As a home care aide, you will have many opportunities to assist your patient with living in a safe environment. If you ever have concerns regarding any part of your patient’s safety, communicate openly with your supervisor so that you deliver the safest, most effective care possible.</li> </ul>	