

Glossary

This glossary will help the reader better understand the experiences of the residents whose stories are told in this document.

ACIDOSIS: An abnormal condition of the blood caused by an accumulation of acid or a decrease in the alkaline reserve content in the blood and the body tissues.

ACUTE RENAL FAILURE: A sudden cessation of kidney function.

ANEURYSM: A sac formed by the dilatation, or stretching, of the wall of an artery or vein.

ASPIRATE: To suck in or inhale into the lungs matter such as food, liquid or gastric contents. vt. –rated.

ASPIRATION: The inhalation into the lungs of food, liquid, or gastric contents.

ASPIRATION PNEUMONIA: A pneumonia resulting from the aspiration, or inhalation, into the lungs of food, liquid, or gastric contents. Some causal or contributing factors to aspiration pneumonia are disorders interfering with swallowing such as a stroke, unconscious or semi-conscious individuals, old age, and dental problems.

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION: Very rapid irregular contractions of the upper chambers of the heart. Atrial fibrillation increases dramatically the incidence of blood clots and strokes, especially in the elderly.

AVULSIONS: A tearing away of a body part accidentally or surgically.

BETADINE: A preparation of povidone-iodine that destroys or delays new tissue growth when applied to healing wounds.

CARCINOMA: A malignant tumor. Commonly referred to as cancer.

CARE PLAN: A written plan for meeting the medical, physical, psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual needs of a nursing home resident.

This care plan is prepared by an interdisciplinary team of staff members working with the resident (when possible), the resident's family (or representative), and the resident's doctor. The care plan must be updated when there is any change of condition, at least every quarter, and annually.

CAROTID: The two main arteries situated on each side of the front of the neck that supply blood to the head.

CATHETERIZE: The insertion of a catheter, or tube, into a body part such as the heart or bladder. The most common catheterization is the insertion of a catheter into the bladder for the removal of urine.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE: C.O.P.D. refers to a group of chronic, irreversible disorders that damage the lungs and over time cause increasing breathing difficulty. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are the two most common forms of C.O.P.D. Cigarette smoking is implicated in 80% of all cases.

COCCYX: A group of four small fused bones coming to a point at the end of the spine. The coccyx is also called the tailbone.

COLOSTOMY BAG: A bag that is kept in position next to the abdomen to collect feces when the intestine is connected surgically to the abdominal wall to form an artificial anus.

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE: Heart failure in which the heart is unable to maintain an adequate circulation of blood to the tissues of the body or to pump out the blood that the veins are returning to the heart by the venous circulation. Congestive heart failure is a chronic condition that can lead to death.

CONTRACTURES: A permanent shortening of a muscle or a tendon, which produces a deformity or distortion of the arm or leg. Contractures are usually preventable if muscles are diligently stretched and exercised.

CYANOTIC: A bluish or purplish discoloration of the skin and mucous membranes due to a lack of oxygen in the blood.

DARVOCET: An analgesic used for mild to moderate pain relief that combines propoxyphene hydrochloride and acetaminophen.

DEBRIDEMENT: The surgical or chemical removal of damaged or diseased tissue that may be impeding healing. Debridement is one of the treatments for severe pressure sores. – debride vt. – brided, -- bridging.

DEMEROL: A narcotic analgesic used for moderate to severe pain relief.

DIABETIC KETOACIDOSIS: Occurs when insulin levels are far lower than the level the body needs and causes the blood to become acidic and the body to be dangerously dehydrated. This is a potentially fatal complication unless treated promptly.

DIURETIC: A medication given to increase the excretion of water from the body when there is a need to rid the body of excess fluids.

ELECTROLYTE IMBALANCE: An inappropriate level of blood electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, or chloride, in the bloodstream. Abnormal levels of electrolytes affect the flow of nutrients into cells and waste products out of cells.

ELOPEMENT: The leaving of a facility by a resident without the knowledge of the staff. Elopement is of special concern when the resident has dementia and leaving the facility puts the resident at high risk for harm.

ESCHAR: A scab-like black crust covering some pressure sores.

FIBULA: The smaller of the two leg bones below the knee.

FLAP SURGERY: Surgery in which a piece of tissue is partly severed from its origin in order to use the skin for a surgical graft. By leaving part of the skin attached to its origin, the blood supply is maintained, and the possibility of a successful graft is increased. Flap surgery can be used for the attempted repair of severe pressure sores.

GANGRENOUS: The death of tissue, in an area such as the foot or a pressure sore, which has been deprived of an adequate oxygen supply.

HYPERNATREMIA: An abnormal elevation of the blood sodium concentration. Normal blood sodium should be 136 to 142 milliequivalents

per liter. Excessively high blood sodium can manifest as a decreased level of consciousness or a change in mental status.

HYPOTHERMIA: A below normal body temperature (<94 degrees) that leads to the elder usually being in critical condition. The mortality rate for hypothermia in the elderly is approximately 50%.

HYPOTHROIDISM: A condition caused by the failure of the thyroid gland to produce adequate hormones.

ILEUS: An obstruction of the intestine. A condition that is commonly accompanied by a painful distended abdomen, dehydration, toxemia, and vomiting of dark vomitus or fecal matter which results when intestinal contents back up because peristalsis, the muscular movements that move food through the intestines, fails.

IRRIGATION: To wash or cleanse an area or tube with a stream of fluid in order to remove debris.

MECHANICAL ASPHYXIA: Suffocation, or a lack of oxygen, not caused by a biological or chemical problem.

METABOLIC ACIDOSIS: A metabolic derangement of the acid-base balance where the blood Ph is abnormally low.

MRSA: Methacillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. Includes several strains of Staphylococcus Aureus that are not killed by the usual antibiotics and can cause very severe infections in wounds or surgical sites.

MYELITIS: Inflammation of the spinal cord or of the bone marrow.

NECROSIS: The death of living tissue. The death of the tissue is frequently caused by pressure on the skin, especially at bony prominences, which can cause the loss of blood supply and oxygen to that area.

NECROTIC TISSUE: Dead tissue.

OSTEOMYELITIS: An infectious inflammatory disease of the bone that is often bacterial in origin. Osteomyelitis is marked by the local death of and the separation of tissue.

PARENTERAL: The administration of a drug or a solution by a route other than the intestines, such as in a vein, muscle, or under the skin.

PERIODONTAL DISEASE: A disease of the tissue surrounding a tooth.

PERIPHERAL VASCULAR DISEASE: A disease of the blood vessels affecting especially the blood vessels of the extremities (arms and legs).

PERITONEUM: The lining of the abdominal cavity that surrounds the organs in the abdomen.

PERITONITIS: Inflammation of the peritoneum.

PNEUMONIA: A disease of the lungs, usually caused by infection, which can involve a fever, chills, difficulty breathing, and a cough.

PRESSURE SORE: A red area, sore, or ulceration on an area of skin that has been deprived of an adequate blood supply by prolonged pressure on that area. Usually occurs over a bony prominence. Other contributing factors to a pressure sore are lying in a wet environment, repeated irritation of the skin caused by traction or friction, and inadequate nutrition and hydration. The pressure sore is “staged” based on the amount of damage to the tissue. Charting of a pressure sore in a facility should include the stage, size in centimeters, a description of any drainage, if there is an odor, any treatment of the area, and any improvement or deterioration of the pressure sore. The stages of pressure sores are:

- Stage I: Skin reddened or purplish. Skin not broken.
- Stage II: Blister or skin broken. Dermis (top layer) and epidermis (second layer) of skin involved.
- Stage III: Deep crater in skin. Sore has damaged the fatty tissue or third layer of skin.
- Stage IV: Deep wound down to the muscle or bone.

A gloved hand can be an easy way to estimate the size of the pressure sore before a definitive measurement is made. The finger at the first joint is approximately 2 centimeters in an average person. Two “fingers” would be four cm., three fingers would be six cm., etc.

PSYCHOSOCIAL: Involving both psychological and social aspects of a person's life, such as age, education, marital status, and related aspects of a person's history.

PULMONARY DISEASE: Any disease of the lungs.

RANGE OF MOTION: The movement of the arms and legs through their normal range of movement in order to keep the muscles healthy.

RENAL: Pertaining to the kidneys.

RESTORATIVE CARE: Treatment provided in order to enable an individual to regain, as much as possible, their normal or healthy former state or lifestyle. Restorative care may involve walking, assistance with eating, talking, transferring from bed to chair, and other activities to attain maximum medical improvement.

SACRAL: Of, or in the region of, the sacrum.

SACRUM: The large flat bone, consisting of five fused vertebrae, which is near the end of the spine. The sacrum is directly connected with and forms a part of the pelvis.

SEPSIS: A toxic condition that results from the spread of bacteria, or their by-products, from the initial site of an infection.

SEPTICEMIA: The invasion of the bloodstream by virulent microorganisms from the initial point of an infection. Septicemia is accompanied by chills, fever, and inability to get out of bed and often by the formation of secondary abscesses in various organs. Also called blood poisoning.

SEPTIC SHOCK: Usually the result of a severe infection where bacteria and toxins in the blood stream cause a low blood pressure. This hypotension causes reduced blood and oxygen to tissues and organs and frequently causes them to malfunction. Septic shock is a life-threatening condition.

SKIN TEAR: A wound, usually on the arms or legs, where the skin has torn apart. Skin tears can be caused by friction, rough handling, falls, etc., and is

seen most frequently in the frail elderly due to the fragile nature of the skin as the fat layer under the skin decreases with age.

STAGE I, II, III, OR IV: See “PRESSURE SORE.”

TIBIA: The shinbone. The tibia is the larger of the two bones below the knee.

TOXIC METABOLIC ENCEPHALOPATHY: A disease where the brain is poisoned. This condition may be due to acidosis, liver failure, or uremia. Tremors that may accompany this condition are characterized by irregular flapping movements of the outstretched hands (as described in The Merck Manual of Geriatrics, Third Edition).

TRACHEOSTOMY: The surgical formation of an opening into the trachea through the neck, especially to allow the passage of air into the lungs when an individual cannot breathe normally on his or her own.

TRACHEOSTOMY TUBE: The tube inserted, at the front of the neck, into the trachea to allow a person to breathe. Periodical suctioning or cleaning of the tube is essential in order to maintain an unobstructed airway.

TRANSFERRING: The movement of a person from one area to another such as from the bed to a wheelchair or from the wheelchair to a commode.

TUNNELING: The extension of a pressure sore under the edges of the skin.

UNDERMINING: The erosion or deterioration of the tissue under the edge of the skin of the pressure sore.

UREMIA: A severe toxic condition caused by the accumulation in the blood of particles that are normally eliminated in the urine. This condition usually occurs when there is severe kidney disease.

URINARY CATHETER: A small tube inserted into the urethra, the opening to the bladder, for the drainage of urine. The catheter is secured in place in the bladder by a small filled balloon.

UROSEPSIS: A toxic condition, which stems from a urinary tract infection, that causes the passing of urine by infiltration or effusion from a proper vessel or channel into surrounding tissues of the body.

VASCULAR DISEASE: A disease of the blood or lymph vessels of the body.

VASCULITIS: Inflammation of a blood or lymph vessel.