

More nursing homes and flats installing ceiling hoists

Such systems, more common in hospitals, ease strain on caregivers of bed-bound patients

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At a growing number of nursing homes and even flats, the heavy lifting is done not by nurses or caregivers, but motorised hoist systems more common in hospitals.

Such systems save time and manpower, as caregivers no longer need to strain to lift bed-bound patients for showers or meals.

They also lower the risks of injury and falls for residents.

The device works by having a person wear a sling attached to motorised tracks on the ceiling.

It enables him to be lifted and transferred from the bed to the wheelchair or toilet easily, removing the need for caregivers to over-exert themselves.

Five children from HCA Hospice Care have had such systems fitted in their flats in February.

In the last few months, Moonlight nursing home and the Red Cross Home for the Disabled also installed similar systems on their premises for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Over the past two years, Asiatic Medicare, which installed the ceiling hoists for the five children, said it has seen a 50 per cent increase in inquiries about them.

"More people are installing (the system) in their homes because they have seen it in hospitals and are aware of its benefits," said Mr Alvin Ng, sales and marketing manager of Asiatic Medicare, a supplier of lifting equipment.

Besides Housing Board flats, such hoists have been installed in

nursing homes and private houses too.

Asiateck Medicare's ceiling hoist is designed and made in Sweden and can lift up to 200kg. OCBC Bank sponsored \$50,000 to have the system installed in the flats of the children from HCA Hospice Care.

Local firm Eascare Mobility developed its own lifting system which costs \$3,000 to \$4,000, so more people can afford it.

It is used in Moonlight nursing home and the flat of a woman with disabilities.

The Red Cross Home for the Disabled is using a \$130,000 manually operated Denmark-designed ceiling track system.

Unlike the linear movement of most automated hoist systems, its hoist can be navigated sideways, allowing caregivers to manoeuvre residents to wherever they want.

The system is paid for with donations from long-time supporters and financial firms Portcullis and Fusang.

Such hoist systems benefit both caregivers and users, say those interviewed.

Dr Chong Poh Heng, medical director at HCA Hospice Care, said lifting and carrying patients manually over a prolonged period often result in caregivers developing back pain, aches and fatigue.

He said: "Some children are fed less milk as their caregivers are worried that they won't be able to handle the children when they grow too heavy."

"This is not good for the children's development."

The ceiling hoist system can also support patients with their walking



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MORE FREEDOM TO MOVE

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MRS S. LEONG, on her sons Matthew and Isaac, who have difficulty in walking, after a ceiling hoist was installed at home.

exercises during rehabilitation sessions, or turn and reposition people regularly so they do not get bed sores or other complications.

Mr Matthew Leong, 22, and his brother Isaac, 15, used to spend many hours confined to their beds and chairs at home due to a neurodegenerative disorder that affects their ability to walk.

The older brother, who lost part of his vision due to the condition, fell almost daily. But the brothers can now practise walking on their own daily as there is a ceiling hoist installed in the bedroom.

This helps to improve their muscle strength, said their mother, Mrs S. Leong, 50, an editor.

"They enjoy a better quality of life now that they have more freedom in moving around."

"They can stand up and look out of the window for a different view," she added.

Dr Chong said HCA Hospice Care was one of the first to introduce ceiling hoists in residential homes, thanks to sponsors like OCBC Bank.

He said: "We are heartened to know that hospitals are now looking into providing similar support for their patients at home, to meet other non-medical needs such as easing the caregivers' physical and psychological strain in looking after their loved ones."

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Healthcare aide Nalawayaa Suranga (left) and nursing aide Glaiza Minasalvas hoisting up Mr Goh Quan Yao at the Red Cross Home for the Disabled to transfer him from the bed to the wheelchair. The aides no longer need to strain to lift bed-bound patients for showers or meals. ST PHOTOS: SYAMIL SAPARI