Chase County Community Hospital is working closely with all staff members to provide the highest quality, safest care for patients with a specific focus on reducing the risk of inpatient falls, a costly and serious adverse event in hospitals.

Falls have a negative impact on patients' health and quality of life and represent a significant cost to society. As such, decreasing the incidence of patient falls is a priority of the federal government, regulatory agencies, hospital quality improvement and risk management programs, as well as patient safety research, said Hospital Administrator Lola Jones.

Although reducing patient fall risk is often viewed as a nursing issue, successful fall risk reduction programs have input from a variety of health care professionals including nursing, physical therapy, pharmacy, medicine, quality improvement/risk management, as well as the support of hospital leadership.

In the past decade, Chase County Hospital has made significant advancements to improve patient safety and minimize the occurrence of patient falls, Jones said.

These advancements include door magnets to identify risk, gait belt usage, a hover pad (an air mattress that enables employees to move a patient using only a fingertip and it is more comfortable for the patient) and the purchase of new beds with sensitive motion alarms and lower entry access.

The physical therapy department is actively involved in employee education on proper patient transfer techniques, along with a post fall investigation program, Jones added.

In an effort to further reduce inpatient fall risk, the hospital is one of 19 across Nebraska that have partnered with researchers at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), The Nebraska Medical Center (TNMC), the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and Methodist Hospital. Through this project, funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the hospitals participating will receive education and support in developing a customized plan to improve their process of managing fall risk.

The research team will also provide support to hospitals in implementing and evaluating the success of their plan over the next two years. This partnership focuses improving inpatient fall risk reduction by leveraging professionalism and providing support from a culture of safety, teamwork and organizational learning.

This collaborative partnership will make a significant contribution to public health by integrating supported practices into fall risk reduction, which will support diffusion and adoption of these practices and make a difference in patient care and patient safety, Jones said.

Dr. Katherine Jones, the lead researcher of the project, said the project is consistent with UNMC's mission to improve the health of Nebraskans.