3-183 High elopement risk

TIPS Question:

At our facility, there is a resident in his late forties; he is ambulatory and looks very much like he could be a visitor. He does exhibit exit-seeking behaviour on a daily basis and frequently wears his jacket. He presents a high elopement risk. With the new privacy of information legislation and rules of confidentiality, it is presenting a challenge to protect this resident. Is it still allowable to use bright stickers on the back of clothing with name of facility and phone number? Cognitively, he would be unable to function in an unprotected environment. He requires one task curing for even simple activities. What strategies can be legally put into place to protect the resident?

Response:

He may be frustrated at not being allowed to come and go as he wishes. His frustration may even extend to anger as exhibited by his dismissing his visitors and some of his actions. The challenge for your care team is to reflect upon what you understand of the behaviour and develop care strategies that can both support the resident while decreasing his opportunity to be at risk of injury. Is there anyone who knew this resident prior to his illness and who could identify any activities in which he might participate to provide more meaningful activity within your unit so he feels less compelled to exit? Did he have any interests related to sports, cards, gambling, construction, topics for discussion, etc?

Although challenging to identify, and modify to adapt to his current capabilities, these strategies may be more successful than psychotropic medication. His physical energy alone may, in fact, be a challenge for the care team as his physical environment may not afford him the opportunity of access to an external but protected walking area such that a volunteer, staff or family, could safely take him, i.e., an area where he could expend energy with minimal risk.

Regarding a mechanism to safeguard the resident from accidental exit from the unit, most schools of thought would not support the labelling of the gentleman's clothing in any way. It is more an issue of dignity than confidentiality and it is clear from your question that you and your care team are sensitive to these issues. One suggestion would be signage outside your unit's door that notifies *ALL* who enter to *NEVER* accommodate the request of any individual to exit if not known to them. This directive must apply to visitors and staff alike. Although you may hear some grumbling to the directive, it may be the only way to protect both the dignity and safety of all of your residents.

Please note: *TIPS information should be used similar to the way you would use information from a text book! TIPS is not intended to serve as an individual consultation service! P.I.E.C.E.S. participants should use this information in context and always work closely with the family physician involved in the care of the resident or client and with other Partners In Care to find solutions to individual resident/client issues.*