Workplace Violence: Safety in Knowledge

Mary Gullatte, PhD, RN, APRN, BC, AOCN
Associate Chief Nursing Officer
Emory University Hospital Midtown, Atlanta, Georgia

Session Objectives
At the end of this presentation the participants will be able to...
1. Recognize and categorize the types of workplace violence
2. Analyze the characteristics of victims and perpetrators
3. Discuss strategies to de-escalate
4. Generate strategies which promote a healthy work environment

Workplace Violence...
- Definition...
  - Any physical assaults and verbal, implied, or written threats of assault and intimidation (NIOSH).
Types of Workplace Violence

- Intimidation: 75.9%
- Angry outbursts: 71.9%
- Hypersensitivity to criticism: 71.5%
- Belligerence: 66.9%
- Threatening/disruptive behavior: 64.6%
- Bullying: 59.8%
- Harassment: 51.6%
- Threats of physical violence: 38.9%
- Ominous or specific threats: 27.9%


Who are the Players

**Perpetrator**
- Patient: 53.2%
- Nursing colleagues: 51.9%
- Physician: 49%
- Visitor: 47%
- Other healthcare worker: 37.7%

**Victim**
- Nursing colleague: 79.7%
- Other HC provider: 50.5%
- Patient: 21.1%
- Physician: 15.5%
- Visitor: 10.9%


Cost of Workplace Violence

- 1993-1999 cost of WP violence: ≈ $4.2 billion dollars annually*
- Rate of violent victimization /1000 nurses: 21.9% (Duhart, 2001)
- ? Under-reporting

* Bureau of Justice National Crime Victimization Survey (2001)
Workplace Violence Profiles

- Certain jobs with greater risk of violence
  - Working with people in emotional situations...
    - Nurses working with patients/families
    - Office personnel handling billing issues
    - Patients dissatisfied with results
  - Working late at night and/or alone
    - Medical records, collection calls, overtime, board meetings
  - Managing drug samples or onsite pharmacy
    - Drug theft and burglary

Philip Dickey (2008)

Workplace Violence Profiles

- **Work situations**
  - Layoffs and firing
  - Passed over for promotion or raise
  - Performance reprimands or warnings
  - Ongoing or unresolved arguments between co-workers

P. Dickey (2008)

Workplace Violence Profiles

- **Personnel Problems**
  - Failed, one-sided, or abusive personal relationships
  - Romantic obsession that includes stalking or harassment
  - Serious personal problems combined with job-related problems

P. Dickey (2008)
Workplace Violence Profiles

- Which nurses are most at risk?
  - Emergency Department
  - Mental health
  - Geriatric
  - Young nurses (lack of experience)
  - Oncology nurses

Mary Gallant-Roman, (2008)

Workplace...Red Flags

- Employees or Someone who...
  - Threatens and intimidates others
  - Blames others for problems
  - Gets angry easily and often
  - Uses abusive language
  - Talks a lot about weapons
  - Holds grudges
  - Reacts angrily to criticisms
  - Difficulty maintaining relationships
  - Abuses drugs
  - History of violent acts

P. Dickey (2008)

Hidden Workplace Violence

- Combative patients
- Support staff (UAPs)
- Co-workers (Nurses, MDs, APPs: NPs, PAs, Managers)
  - Incivility - rude, discourteous acts
  - Bullying - belittling, finding fault
  - Mobbing - multiple people against one person
  - Intimidation - frighten, influence through fear
Factors Foster Uncivil Behaviors

- Occupational stress
- Difficult working conditions
- Unresolved conflict
- Lack of leadership
- Oppression
- Isolation of and less social engagement
- Complexity and fragmentation of relationships

Farkas & Johnson (2002)

Employee Workplace Behaviors

- What you Permit you Promote...
  - Not setting limits when you hear about inappropriate behaviors
  - Employees not respecting leadership decisions
  - Undermining authority
  - Unfair, unilateral decision
  - Uncivil behavior is contagious

Harkreader (2008)

Consequences of Negative Workplace Relationships

- Job dissatisfaction
- Decreased worker productivity
- Job withdrawal (work avoidance: call-outs)

Harkreader (2008)
Keys to Prevention

Prevention: Start with the Work Environment
- Foster a harmonious, supportive work environment
- Provide fair treatment and performance management for all employees
- Offer Conflict Resolution and Effective Communication training for staff

Prevention: Start with the Work Environment
- Establish procedures for handling grievances
- Take threats seriously and respond rapidly
- Monitor and manage the stress levels of the work environment
Know your team members:
- Individual responses to stress
- Monitor team dynamics
- Stay connected and engaged
- Make note of the formal and informal communication of the team
- Keep lines of communication open with employees
- Utilize clear, direct communication when engaged in constructive confrontation

Possible Precipitating Events
- Work Factors
  - Discipline or Negative Performance Review
  - Reduction In Force/Termination/Demotion/
    Promotion Denial
  - Accumulated Grievances
  - Perception of Harassment
- Personal Factors
  - Loss of Relationship
  - Financial Loss
  - Legal Action
  - Loss of Face/Humiliation
  - Personal Rejection

Keys to De-escalation
Work Place Violence: Success Strategies

- Evaluate your workplace
- Use top-down approach and buy-in
- Institute zero tolerance
- Empowerment of Nurses
- Predict High-risk events
- Provide education for all

Progression of Violence

- Traumatic experience perceived as being unsolvable
- Projection of Responsibility
- Defensive Attitude
- Perception of “No Justice”
- Takes “Justice” into own hands

Report Warning Signs Immediately

- Ominous Treats
- Threatening Actions
- Bizarre Thoughts and/or Behaviors
- Obsessive Thoughts and/or Behaviors
- Stalking Behaviors
- Aggressive and threatening emails
- Sharing inappropriate behaviors with colleagues (e.g., purchase of weapons)

Baron (2000)
Resources

- Police/Security Department
- Human Resources
- General Counsel
- Critical Incident Response Team
- Chaplains/ Pastoral Counseling Services

Evaluation and Response to Workplace Violence:

- Zero Tolerance for WP violence (OSHA)
- Identify your organizational resources
- Document and seek consultation about the warning signs:
  - Behaviors
  - Interpersonal interactions
  - Persecutory thoughts and emails
  - Changes in work performance

Next Steps
Healthy Work Environments

Made, NOT Born... YOU are the Catalyst.

A Healthy Work Environment

- Starts with YOU

Empowerment Zone

What can you do to empower your voice and connect in the workplace?
Consequences of an UN-Healthy Work Environment

- Lack of teamwork
- Risk to patient safety
- Lack of staff engagement
- Workplace violence
  - Lateral violence within the work group
- Lack of patient, employee, and provider satisfaction
- High staff turnover among all groups

Signs of a Healthy Work Environment

1. Employees laugh often
2. Employees freely share their ideas
3. Employee values and expectations are clear
4. We work simply: decrease complexity
5. Our organization is reasonably orderly and comfortable
6. Employees have strong connections with others
7. Encourage and reward staff that volunteer outside of work

Characteristics of a Healthy Work Environment. adapted from www.aacn.org

- Skilled communication
- True collaboration
- Effective decision making
- Appropriate staffing/coverage
- Meaningful recognition
- Authentic leadership
- Trust, Value, Respect
A Healthy Work Environment Begins with TRUST

TRUST: Assets and Liabilities

Environment of Nonexistent Trust

- Organization
  - Dysfunctional environment and toxic culture (open warfare, sabotage, grievances, etc)
  - Micromanagement
  - Punishing systems

- Personal Relationships
  - Dysfunctional relationships
  - Hostile behaviors (yelling, blaming, accusing)
  - Defensive posturing
  - Labeling others as enemies

Environment of Very Low Trust

- Organizational
  - Unhealthy working environment
  - Unhappy employees
  - Excessive time wasted defending positions and decisions

- Personal Relationships
  - Hostile behaviors (yelling, blaming, accusing)
  - Guarded communication
  - Worrying and suspicion
  - Mistakes remembered and used as weapons
  - Real issues not surfaced or dealt with effectively
Environment - Trust is a Visible Asset

- **Organizational**
  - The focus is on work
  - Effective collaboration and execution

- **Personal Relationships**
  - Cooperative, close vibrant relationships
  - A focus on looking or and leveraging one another’s strengths
  - Uplifting and positive communication

Covey, S.R.M. (2006)

---

Inspiring TRUST

- Nothing is as profitable as the economics of trust
- Nothing is as relevant as the pervasive impact of trust
- The dividends of trust can significantly enhance the quality of every relationship on every level of your life.

Covey (2006), p. 285

---

Shared Governance/ Decision Making

An organizational innovation that gives healthcare professionals control over their practice and extends their influence into administrative areas previously controlled only by managers. Governance models should be evidence-based.

http://www.sharedgovernance.org/

(Porter-O’Grady, 2003)
Positive Consequences of Shared Governance/Decision Making

- Improved decision making
- Service excellence
- Organizational influence
- Collaboration
- Improved communication
- Healthy Work Environment

Creating a Healthy Culture

- Collaborative Partnerships
- Respect and Value of each person
- Zero tolerance of workplace violence in policy
- Label disruptive behavior included in policy
- Enforcement has to be at every level
  - Front-line managers
  - Senior level administrators
  - Medical staff
  - All Healthcare Staff

Keeping Healthy… Integrating into a New Work Culture

- What works?
  - Self-esteem
  - Self-confidence not cocky
    - Build Knowledge
    - Workplace culture
    - People
    - Clinical
    - Clinical skills
    - People relationships/skills
    - Positive influence with people
  - Leadership
  - Seek a mentor
If all else fails…

What do you do???

Group Discussion…

Share some unhealthy work environment behaviors (forms of violence in the workplace) you have encountered as a student?

- How did you handle it?
- What was the outcome?
- Would you do anything differently?

Your Thoughts…