

Understanding violence in the healthcare workplace

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Introduction and Purpose

The authors came upon the realization of the frequency of violence in the healthcare setting and the impacts it can have upon the worker as well as the patient. The research the authors accomplished investigates the different forms of violence that are experienced by nurses as well as other healthcare workers. It was essential to have the baseline of what “Violence in the Healthcare Workplace” meant. That is because violence towards the healthcare worker is not just physical violence as many individuals may think it also can include psychological violence. In fact, as stated in the research, nurses reported being victims of shouting or yelling at sixty percent versus kicking or scratching at thirty-eight percent. There was a higher chance of the nurse to experience psychological violence rather than physical violence. (Gillespie et al., 2014)

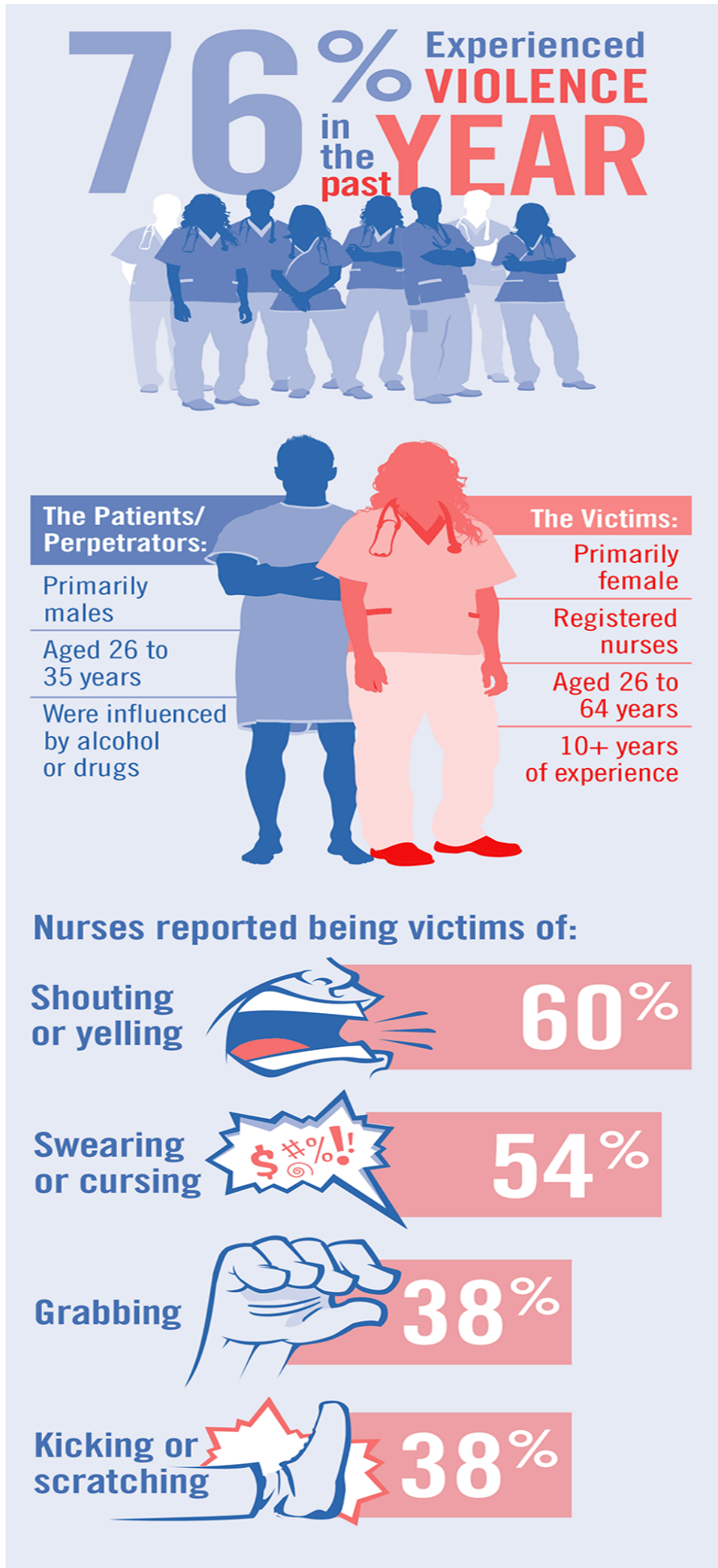
It was also important to understand what interventions would decrease the occurrence of the healthcare worker from experiencing violence within the healthcare setting. Lastly areas in which additional research is needed to better understand and prevent violence that occurs in the healthcare setting.

Background and Significance

Violence against healthcare workers is a serious problem that impacts the healthcare system and society. According to statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the number of workplace assaults between 2011 and 2013 ranged from 23,540 to 25,630 annually; and of these assaults 70% to 74% occurred in healthcare and social service settings (Guidelines for preventing workplace violence for healthcare and social service workers, 2015, p. 2). Exposure to violence has several negative consequences. In many cases, injuries against healthcare workers resulted in days away from work. Of these injuries, 10%-11% were due to assaults (Guidelines for preventing workplace violence for healthcare and social service workers, 2015, p. 2). Acts of violence also resulted in deaths among healthcare workers. During 2013, 27 out of every 100 deaths that occurred in healthcare and social service settings were caused by assaults and violent acts (Guidelines for preventing workplace violence for healthcare and social service workers, 2015, p. 2). This issue clearly has significant implications for the nursing profession. In comparison to other occupations, nurses are at an increased risk of being a victim of violence. This violence can negatively affect performance which has a downstream effect on society. A decrease in performance could lead to nurses making mistakes when interacting with patients and compromising the quality of care. To guarantee patients are receiving the utmost quality of care, it is important to address this issue and ensure that nurses and healthcare workers are protected and can work at peak performance.

Literature Review Methods

The authors utilized their access to the East Tennessee State University Library’s database subscriptions to search for peer-reviewed journal articles using keywords such as healthcare, violence, workplace, and nurse. The most used databases were CINAHL and PubMed. The authors attempted to exclude studies published prior to 2015, however, due to the lack of available research they conservatively expanded their search criteria to include studies published prior to 2015. The authors selected 25 articles using the criteria.



Source: *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, May 2014.

Findings

Within the studies and research centered upon the global concerns of violence in the nursing and healthcare setting, parallel findings and influences have been observed amongst each of the studies performed. The outcomes have included the factors of age, ethnicity, gender, and social status among the studies. In a journal from *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, it was discovered that at least once throughout the 18-month study period among 1333 monthly studies there had been a lofty percentage of 86% of participants reporting being threatened or assaulted (Gillsepi, 2014). High rates of abuse towards healthcare workers were observed among various hospitals and units internationally. Numerous forms of violence had been reported containing the following: emotional, physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

Additional results implicated the site of the hospitals and the increased risk for healthcare workers within the association. As stated in the article *Preventing Patient-to-Worker Violence in Hospitals*, “Hospital employees in the United States have a higher risk of injury from violence compared to workers in other industries, with most of the violence attributed to Patients” (Arnetz et al., 2017, p.59). Income and other factors have been shown to contribute to violence rates within the location of multiple medical facilities in United Sates and other countries, with the U.S being one of the higher rates.

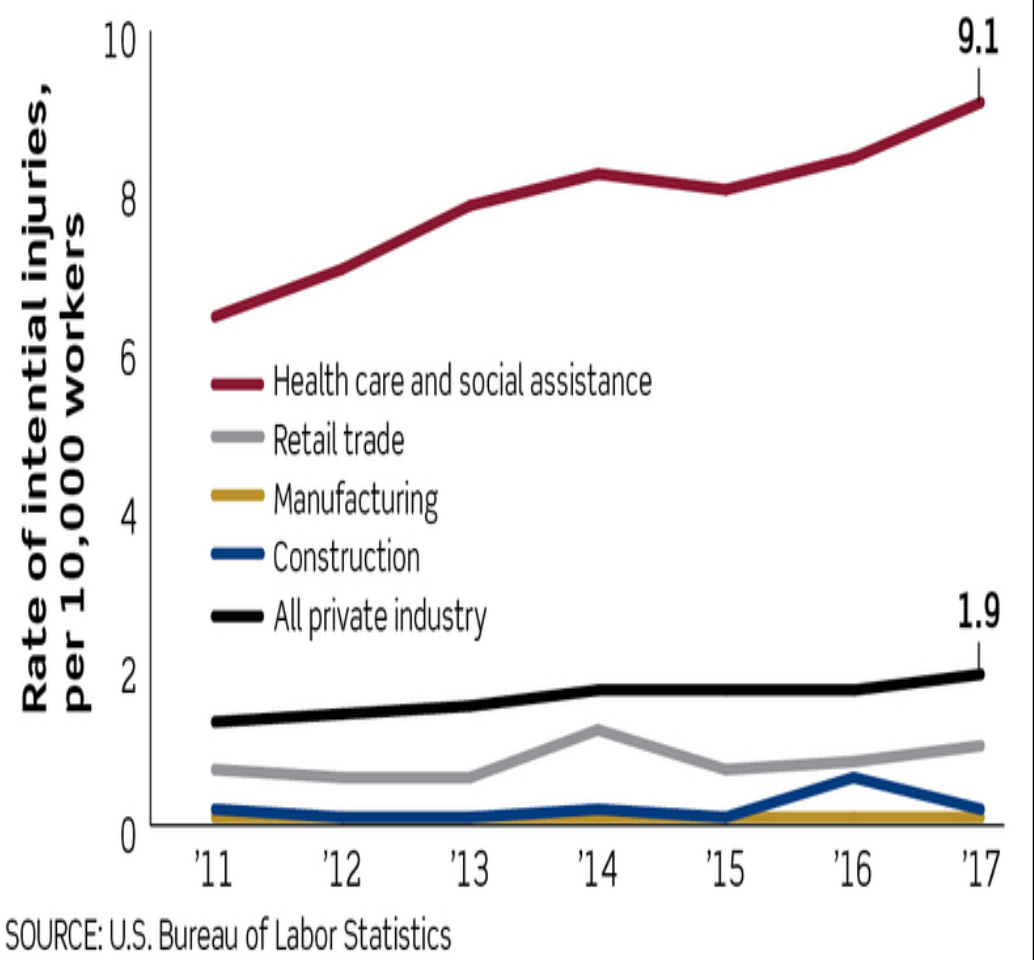
Finally, findings on rises in violence risks were influenced by substance abuse and heavy alcohol use among patients admitted to hospitals and healthcare facilities. Prolonged waiting times were additionally reported to influence patients and visitors to become more violent towards the workers. Both verbal and physical abuse were the most common forms of violence against healthcare workers tending to patients involved with alcohol and substance abuse (Pich, 2011). Preventative measures such as strengthened security, alarms, and education on prevention of violence have been advocated to reduce the risk of violence acted out by patients admitted to the facilities.

Conclusion

Violence in the healthcare workplace is a critical issue that needs to be addressed and examined further. It has become an international concern among the healthcare sectors. It is necessary to develop an awareness of healthcare violence that nurses face constantly during their careers. After reviewing multiple studies and peer-reviewed articles, we have concluded that workplace violence is not only affecting nurses' mental and physical health but is also one of the causes of nurses' burnout. However, support and training programs could be beneficial to healthcare workers in coping and managing workplace violence. Nurses’ need to provide a safe environment with adequate resources to facilitate their safety by their organizations. A workplace violence prevention program and training can provide a desirable environment that allows healthcare workers to focus on patient care. Further research and studies need to be conducted on workplace violence and nurses' burnout.

Intentional worker injuries on the rise

Health care and social assistance workers experience intentional injuries by another person at far greater rates than the private industry overall. This includes only injuries involving days away from work.



References

