

Workplace Violence

Physician Safety

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Learning Objectives

Define

Define types of workplace violence

Recognize

Recognize warning signs of workplace violence

Understand

Understand basic methods to prevent workplace violence

The Problem

- We need more doctors.
- Physicians, Advanced Practice Providers (APP), Nurses, MAs, and office staff are stretched thin.
- Patients are frustrated.
- The internet has become a trusted source of medical information.
- People seem to lack patience and empathy.
- Filters have been removed.

Violence in Health Care

- Almost half of workplace violence occurs in a health care setting.
- 40% to 70% of health care workers reported physical or verbal abuse
- Physicians, APPs, and other staff are the targets of violence in their workplaces far more often than most other professionals and workers.
- The majority of injuries from assaults at work that required days off work occurred in the healthcare and social services settings.
- The Departments of Labor and Justice say workplace violence is underreported and rates of violence are much higher.

Types of Workplace Violence

- Verbal Threats
- Harassment
- Intimidation
- Physical Threats
- Physical Abuse
- Active Shooter

Reasons for Workplace Violence

- Anger
 - Result of perceived loss
 - Sense of unfair treatment
 - Need to know you see and understand their situation
 - Wants to be validated
- Aggression
 - Feels unheard
 - Feels unimportant
 - Increasing frustration with no potential resolution

Trivialization

- “It comes with the territory.”
- “It’s just part of the job.”
- “Their aggressive behavior is because of their illness.”
- “If I treated them more effectively, they wouldn’t act like this.”
- “I wasn’t hurt.”

Vulnerability

- Front office staff
- Billing staff
- Back-office staff
- Office management
- Nursing staff
- Resident physicians
- Advanced Practice Providers
- Physicians

Risk Factors

- Past behavior or noncompliance
- Patient or family member reaction to medical diagnosis
- Patient or family member impairment
- Drug-seeking behavior

Warning Signs

- Anxiety, agitation, restlessness
- Glaring and staring
- Pacing, rapid movements
- Raised voice
- Aggressive body language
 - Clenched fists
 - Throwing objects in frustration

Warning Signs

- **S** - STARING -prolonged glaring at staff
- **T** - TONE -sharp, sarcastic, loud, argumentative
- **A** - ANXIETY -flushed face, heavy breathing, rapid speech, reaction to pain
- **M** - MUTTERING -talking under breath, criticizing staff to self or others, mimicking staff
- **P** - PACING -walking around in confined space, walking into areas that are off limits

De-escalation

- Shorten the wait if possible.
- Use calming language – I understand that you are upset. How can I help?
- Practice active listening to get to the heart of the problem
- Acknowledge the problem and take it seriously

Prevention

- Patient Code of Conduct
 - Direct language
 - Clearly state prohibited behavior
 - Clearly state expectations
 - Set limits
 - Examples
 - Consequences

Culture of Safety

- Empower staff - See something, say something
- Training and drills
 - Recognize emotions
 - Communications techniques
 - Measures for dealing with aggressive behavior
- Understand the employer's responsibility in providing a safe work environment

Questions?



Thank you!

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