The experiences of New South Wales Nurses and Midwives with Violence on the Job

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What superpower would you like to have?

Mind reading

Invisibility

Teleportation

Flying

I already have a superpower
What did we want to do?

• Identify the experiences of members of NSWNMA with violence from patients and/or friends or relatives in their workplace
How concerned are you about violence on the job? (1 = not concerned to 4 = very concerned)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not concerned</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly concerned</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very concerned</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergency rooms: our ice-fuelled epidemic of hospital violence

A rise in violent assaults is turning hospitals into battle grounds

Nurses at Blacktown Hospital fed up

Posted on August 29, 2018

Ice behind 150,000 emergency dept visits

Outback NSW community backs nurses to stem violence against emergency workers

Nurses protested outside Cooma Hospital on Friday 23 November following an incident at the hospital on Wednesday, where two nurses were allegedly assaulted and injured.
Study Design

- Online survey - distributed to 63000 members of the NSWNMA
- 73 item survey developed based on previous survey (VENT Study) updated using current literature on topic and advise from NSWNMA
- Expert panels
- Data analysis – aided by statisticians from HMRI
Results
Sample

- Data collected June-August 2018
- Inclusion: working in clinical environment in last 6 months – in a paid position
- Sample size: n = 3416 included
  - n = 3545 responded
  - n = 129 excluded
Demographic profile of sample

- **Employment fraction:**
  - Full-time (52%) & Part-time & casual/agency (48%)

- **Sector:**
  - Public (79%), Private (15%), Not for profit (6%)

- **Regional analysis:**
  - Metropolitan (46%)
  - Regional (49%)
  - Remote (5%)
Demographic profile of sample

- **Age:** majority of sample aged over 45 (76%)
  - **Gender:** Female (87%), Male (13%)
  - **Classification:** RNs (77%), RM (7%), EN (11%), AIN (5%)
Have you ever experienced violence at work?

YES

NO
The amount of violence

- 47% had been involved in an episode in previous week
- 80% had been involved in an episode of violence in previous 6 months
- 76% had experienced verbal/non physical abuse
- 24% had experienced physical abuse

Number of reported episodes ranged from 1 to 100 with the majority reporting between 1-20 episodes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical speciality</th>
<th>Violence experienced (n = 3092) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>481/514 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug &amp; Alcohol</td>
<td>44/47 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED</td>
<td>264/28 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU/HDU/CCU</td>
<td>159/187 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/surgical</td>
<td>561/681 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehab/disability</td>
<td>73/91 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged care</td>
<td>335/424 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perioperative</td>
<td>106/165 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community health</td>
<td>74/126 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwifery</td>
<td>121/208 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Children’s health/paeds</td>
<td>60/107 (56%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Violence experienced based on geographical location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Violence experience (n = 3092)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major city</td>
<td>1081/1376 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner regional e.g. Newcastle</td>
<td>599/734 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer regional e.g. Tamworth</td>
<td>605/742 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote &amp; very remote e.g. Broken Hill</td>
<td>121/154 (79%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Violence experienced per sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Violence experienced (n = 3092)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1973/2409 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>323/469 (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not for profit</td>
<td>151/190 (79%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Violence experienced by job classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job classification</th>
<th>Violence experienced (n = 3092)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>1941/2388 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Midwife</td>
<td>126/208 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled Nurse</td>
<td>282/355 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant in Nursing</td>
<td>111/141 (79%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Older and more experienced nurses and midwives reported less episodes of violence, with younger and less experienced participants at greater risk of violence.

Males were more likely to experience an episode of violence than females (88% to 78%).
Have you experienced VERBAL ABUSE/NON-PHYSICAL violence at work?
### Verbal abuse/Non-physical violence

*multiple responses were allowed for these items*
The use of social media & taking of photographs was reported by 14%

25% reported sexually inappropriate behaviour
Comments...

- "...Racist comments..."
- "...stalking me at my home..."
- "...Death threats..."

"... Just released ex prisoner (Manslaughter) allowed to harass staff without boundary by Mental Health Administration..."

"... threatened to knife rape me..."

"...threatened to kill my kids and family...

"... Demeaning inappropriate personal questions..."
Have you experienced PHYSICAL VIOLENCE at work?
## Physical violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most frequent types of physical abuse</th>
<th>n = 1957</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grabbing</td>
<td>1179 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting</td>
<td>1166 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive behaviour</td>
<td>1084 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitting</td>
<td>1038 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing</td>
<td>1029 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*multiple responses were allowed for these items*
- 35% reported use of a weapon
- 41% reported inappropriate physical or sexual contact
- 2% had been sexually assaulted
“...petrol attack...

“...threatening with a weapon (scissors)...

“...doused with diesel and threatened with weapon...

“...lighting a fire in the department...

“...bleach thrown on me...

“...have had semen thrown at me...
...in worst instance 23yr old ice user threatened to 'knife rape', also threatened to 'kill my kids and family' and threatened to have his friends follow me home. Incident was witnessed, I documented it and yet received no help from management and was allocated same patient in HDU next day despite having been very shaken...”
## Type of violence experienced by geographical location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of violence</th>
<th>Metro (n = 1487)</th>
<th>Regional (n = 1606)</th>
<th>Remote (n = 161)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse and/or non-physical</td>
<td>848 (78%)</td>
<td>897 (73%)</td>
<td>102 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>246 (22%)</td>
<td>325 (27%)</td>
<td>21 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you ever been injured as a result of an episode of violence at work?
Impact of violence: INJURIES

- Reported by 28% (809)
  - Psychological injury
  - Bruising
  - Actions taken…
    - 259 sought medical attention
    - 309 took time off work (8 were off work for >1 year)
    - 78 permanent disability leading to change of work duties or inability to work
Impact of violence: Psychological & professional

- Psychological
  - PTSD symptoms

- Professional
  - Impact on professional practice
  - Impact on working life
  - e.g. burnout & stress, conflict with co-workers, reduced morale, intent to leave profession
## Emotional responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional responses</th>
<th>(n = 1851)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unhappiness</td>
<td>1168 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>1082 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>1048 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of future episodes</td>
<td>1028 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>912 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altered sleep patterns</td>
<td>737 (40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“... I ended up resigning…”

- “…suicidal thoughts…”
- “…increase in anxiety and questioning self worth…”
- “…hair fell out…”
- “…weight gain, alcohol dependence, binge eating, loss of sexual function…”

“...too distressed to attend work…”

“...forced retirement…”

“... Remain on leave after 6 weeks…”
Choose a WORD that best describes how SAFE you feel at work
Feeling safe at work

- Safe (11%)
- Somewhat safe (61%)
- Unsafe (28%)
Safe

- Communication e.g. Safety huddles
- Security
- Risk assessment
- Safety culture
  - Supportive teams
  - Proactive management
  - Work in pairs
Somewhat safe - Unsafe

- **Staffing:** Poor skills mix e.g. AINs in MH
  - Inadequate staffing
- **Volume of patients:** Increased numbers of high risk patients
  - Waiting times/bed block
- **Management**
  - Lack of support
  - Lack of follow up
Security

- Restricted powers
- Lack of security especially after hours & regional/remote areas
- Unskilled at de-escalation
- Time to respond
- Duress alarms
“...I expect to be abused and threatened...often attacked occasionally...”

“I go to work not knowing if I will be safe...”

“I am used to this level of violence and it’s only when I compare my job with other non-health care friends’ jobs I realise how crazy it is that we are exposed to it...”
Do you report episodes of PHYSICAL violence?

YES

NO

SOMETIMES
Reporting

- Yes - reported ALL episodes
- Yes - reported SOME episodes
- No episodes reported
Reason for not reporting

- Don’t expect anything to change
- Accepted/expected part of job
- Lack of follow up/response from management
- Intent
- Time constraints
- Too complicated
- Feel can manage episodes effectively
- Fear of being blamed for episode
- Not sure how to report
Comments…

- “...Was told not to bother about reporting to police...”
- “...so common its not really considered 'IIMS worthy...'”
- “...Fear that I would look incompetent...or be blamed”
- “… basically put across to us that it is an expected/acceptable part of the job to deal with...”
- “...NSW health has zero tolerance, but it's only words and no action to prevent it. To be honest it's bullshit...”
- “...Nothing ever gets done about the reports...”
Antecedents & precipitants:
What types of patients have you experienced violence (verbal or physical) from?
# Signs & symptoms of patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs &amp; symptoms</th>
<th>n = 1742</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>1260 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety &amp; agitation</td>
<td>1059 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance misuse</td>
<td>936 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>843 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol intoxication</td>
<td>646 (37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visitors/Friends/Relatives – signs & symptoms

1. Mental health issues: 78%
2. Substance misuse: 57%
3. Alcohol intoxication: 46%
## Nursing/midwifery activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>n = 1806</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with patients/friends/relatives</td>
<td>1093 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting with activities of daily living</td>
<td>653 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing reactions to delays</td>
<td>607 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving oral medications</td>
<td>557 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning/turning/lifting patients</td>
<td>449 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>n = 1741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms or wards</td>
<td>1292 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corridors</td>
<td>653 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared communal spaces e.g. dining room, garden</td>
<td>459 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting room</td>
<td>373 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Birthing suite
- Outside work e.g. car park
Comments...

- "...on the telephone..."
- "...on social media..."
- "...nurses’ station..."
- "...fire stairs stairwell leading to the outside of the hospital..."
- "...sometimes in the parking areas and on the street...doctor and nurse vehicles have been scratched/damaged..."
“...24hr daily for months on end...”
“...at all times...”
“...happens randomly...”
Management of episodes of violence
Most (60%) NOT satisfied with employer’s immediate response following an episode of violence.

Majority (60%) were NOT offered access to recognised counselling services following an episode of violence.

In the majority of cases (87%) changes were NOT introduced following an episode of violence.
Support

- Majority (67%) **NOT** provided with adequate information, support & follow up
- 43% **NOT** provided with **any** support
- 11% were **blamed**

- "**After most recent violent act nothing was done, even when staff stated they felt unsafe...**”
- "...**Staff told to "work safer“...”**
Policies

- Most (88%) perceived policies to be **ineffective** or only somewhat effective
- “...Policy in place **but not enforced**, incidences ‘swept under the carpet’, not taken seriously by management...”
- “...Policies are increasingly **ignored** by management and are just used to shift responsibility to the clinician..”
- “...Zero tolerance doesn’t seem to exist in my workplace except on posters...”
Risk prevention/management strategies

- “...Security guards only part time in the week…”
- “...no strategies in place…
  “...nursing staff still have to do lock down…”
- “…1 duress alarm in ward of 32 beds… none have been re
  ordered due to cost…”
- “…No staff training… short staffed…”
- “…No policies are changed after a staff is assaulted…”
- “…No support from management at all…”
Do you think violence is an inevitable part of nursing?
The majority of participants (86%) believe that violence is an **inevitable part of their job**

- The majority (76%) believe that violence is **increasing** in frequency and severity
Final comments…

- “…Managers don't seem to be concerned about the safety of staff…”
- “…Outside our work environment aggression and violence is not tolerated and people are accountable by law for their actions, so why are patients and their associates so protected and enable to act the way they do without consequences?…”
- “…I work in an unsafe hospital…”
“…Security monitoring company 160km away. Police frequently out of town. Facility frequently unprotected, may take hours for help to arrive. No onsite security at all. Could all be dead before help arrives. ..”

“…Nurses are losing control of a safe working environment…”

“…Too many good nurses are being harmed and no one seems to care…”
Action as a result of this study

- NSW Health review
- Media interest
- Safework

'Ripped, punched, covered in bodily fluids':
Damning NSW nursing report reveals workplace abuse cases

By 9News Staff | 6:47pm Feb 9, 2019
To YOU the members of the NSWNMA

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