



Your free newsletter on workplace violence issues brought to you by Peace at Work. Please feel free to distribute and forward to others who may benefit from this e-newsletter.

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Newsletter Topic: Violence in our Hospitals

When a victim is traumatized by violence, it is the caring, dedicated healthcare professionals who can help them start the healing process. But all too often, these workers are threatened and assaulted in the very place where injuries are treated. Around the world, health-techs, front desk clerks, nurses and physicians are noting the impact of this violence and making changes to address the threat. Here are just a few reports:

2003 Statistics – Private Healthcare Industry – Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- 13 Homicides
- 103,4000 cases of Lost-Work Days from Assault

Michigan College of Emergency Physicians Survey of 171 Doctors:

In the previous 12 months from the when the survey was taken:

- 75% experienced verbal assault,
- 28% experienced physical assault,
- 12% were confronted outside of the ED and
- 4% experienced a stalking event.
- 82% of emergency physicians were "occasionally fearful" of workplace violence while 9.4% were "frequently fearful".
- 42% sought to protect themselves, including obtaining a
 - gun (18%)
 - knife (20%)
 - concealed weapon license (13%)
 - mace (7%)
 - club (4%)
 - security escort (31%)

Link to full study at (cut and paste in URL bar if link does not work or contact me)
<http://www2.us.elsevierhealth.com/scripts/om.dll/serve?action=searchdb&searchdbfor=art&arttype=abs&id=as0196064404015045&nav=abs>

Massachusetts Legislation Sen. Jarrett Barrios has proposed a bill that requires health-care providers of five or more employees to create employee training programs and a system for reporting and monitoring incidents of violence. It would mandate a written violence-prevention plan which may include use of security and safety equipment, additional staffing and employee training. The Massachusetts Nurses Association polled 172 nurses at three hospitals finding that more than 30% were physically threatened over the last two years and 25% had been pinched, scratched, spit on or their hands or wrists were twisted on the job.

Similar Oregon Legislation Senate Bill 572 was unanimously passed which would increase protection from workplace violence for all of Oregon's nurses and home health care workers through several measures. First, it require employers to record and report the number of violent incidents in their facility and to have a violence response and prevention plan. It also ensures legal protections for nurses who report violent acts without fear of reprisals from their employers; allows nurses to refuse to treat a patient unless a second staff member is present; it allows home health care workers to refuse to treat a patient unless they are provided a cell phone or other communication device; and it prevents an employer from punishing a nurse for using necessary force in self-defense.

OSHA Fines California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health levied \$54,000 in penalties for reported safety violations after the murder of Dr. Erlinda Ursua at John George Psychiatric Pavilion in San Leandro in 2004. The institute already been fined with proposed penalties (\$30,000) for other security-related issues when Cal/OSHA stated a new series of security concerns including that the examination room was too isolated from other employees, the "panic alarm" was too far away for Ursua to reach and that hospital staff failed to follow an unwritten policy that doctors were never to be left alone with "potentially violent patients."

Is your healthcare institution addressing this issue? Peace at Work has provided De-escalation of Hostile Behavior programs for numerous health care workers and institutions. Contact me to help your organization implement a violence prevention and management program at 919.719.7203.

www.peaceatwork.org