A5-22: Verbal Abuse of Nurses by Patients and Families

Author List:
Presenting Author: Myra Goldman
Additional Author: Ann Truman, Jill Berger, Robert Topp

Presenting Author: Myra Goldman
Address: 555 South Floyd Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40203
United States
Ph: (502) 641-0861
Fax:
Email: mkgold01@louisville.edu
Institution: University of Louisville

Additional Author: Ann Truman
Address: 231 Chestnut
Louisville, Kentucky 20404
United States
Ph: 502-629-5446
Fax:
Email: ann.truman@nortonhealthcare.org
Institution: Kosiar Children's Hospital

Additional Author: Jill Berger
Address: 231 E Chestnut St Box N-38
Louisville, Kentucky 40202
United States
Ph: 502-629-5566
Fax:
Email: jill.berger@nortonhealthcare.org
Institution: Kosiar Children's Hospital

Additional Author: Robert Topp
Address: 555 S. Floyd
Louisville, Kentucky 40292
United States
Ph: 502-852-8510
Fax:
Email: rvtopp01@louisville.edu
Institution: University of Louisville
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**Abstract:**
**Introduction:** Between 1993 and 1999 nurses in the U.S. experienced the highest rate of work related violence (22 per 1,000 workers) when compared with other healthcare professionals. Understanding the extent and characteristics of verbal abuse against nurses is the first step toward minimizing this problem and its outcomes. The purpose of this ongoing study is to determine the extent and characteristics of verbal abuse by patients and/or their families experienced by nurses who work in a Children’s Hospital.

**Method(s):** To date 120 RNs employed full or part time by Kosair Children’s Hospital (KCH) have participated in the study. This descriptive study requests subjects anonymously complete 3 questionnaires including a demographic instrument and two previously established paper and pencil instruments concerning the characteristics of verbal abuse the subject experienced by patients and/or their families.

**Results:** The sample is primarily female (97.5%) with a baccalaureate or Masters’ degree (63%), with an average age of 39 + 10.64 years, who have been employed as a nurse for 14 years, 11 years of which have been at KCH. Two-thirds of the sample (n=80) reported experiencing verbal abuse with an average of 4.00 + 9.75 verbal abuse incidents occurring in the previous 30 days. 89% of these individuals contemplated over the incident greater than two hours with 20% of the sample contemplating greater than a week up to a year. 43% of the sample reported being angry or powerless after a verbally abusive incident. Further, 18% indicated that they have contemplated leaving their job after a verbally abusive incident. A significant correlation exists between nurses who deem the verbally abusive experience as threatening and their emotional response (r = .74) as well an emotional response to the verbal abuse is correlated with positive coping (r = .36).

**Discussion & Conclusions:** The findings of this study appear to indicate that verbal abuse of nurses employed at KCH by patients and/or their families is a significant problem resulting emotional responses from the nurses, and long periods of contemplation including thinking of changing jobs. Administrators may use these results to develop policy to minimize the incidence and impact of verbal abuse on nurses.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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Submitted by:
mkgold01@louisville.edu