



# ...when two worlds collide...

violence in the workplace

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MSNA 2023



# disclaimers

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# overview

- defining workplace violence
- prevalence
- impact
- case study
- managing risk and creating safety
- resources



# definition

- definitions vary widely
- historically scope was limited to physical violence
- definition has broadened to include all aggressive behaviour<sup>1</sup>

1. Nelson S, Leslie K, McCormick A, Gonsalves JP, Baumann A, Thiessen NJ, Schiller C. Workplace Violence Against Nurses in Canada: A Legal Analysis. *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice*. 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15271544231182583>

# definition

- workplace violence is defined as incidents in which staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in their place of work<sup>2</sup>
- the use of physical or non-physical force against individuals or groups that may cause injury to the victims physical, mental, spiritual, sexual, moral or social well-being<sup>3</sup>

2. Geoffrion S, Hills DJ, Ross HM, et al. Education and training for preventing and minimizing workplace aggression directed toward healthcare workers. *Cochrane Systematic Review*. 2020;9(9) CD011860. doi:10.1002/14651858

3. Boyle MJ, Wallis J. Working towards a definition for workplace violence actions in the health sector. *Safe Health*. 2016;2. DOI:10.1186/S40886-01600015-8

# definition

- verbal and emotional abuse or threats
- threatening or intimidating behaviour in writing, including social media
- gendered, racial slurs
- aggression, physical violence
- behaviour that creates a fear of violence<sup>4</sup>



4. NSW Government Webpage, accessed 15 Oct 2023 . <https://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/stories/mental-health-at-work-blogs/hard-hitting-truth-behind-workplace-violence>

# prevalence



- 2021 - SafeWork Australia

- 40% of mental illnesses at work are caused by exposure to violence
- 37% of workers report being sworn or yelled at in the workplace
- 22% of workers report being physically assaulted or threatened by patients or clients
- 11% of workers experienced gender-based slurs



# prevalence

- 2021 - SafeWork Australia
  - Higher risk industries include:
    - health care and social assistance, including nurses, doctors, paramedics, home carers
    - public administration workers, including police, security, welfare support
    - retail trade, food services, grocery workers, pharmacies, restaurants
    - education and training

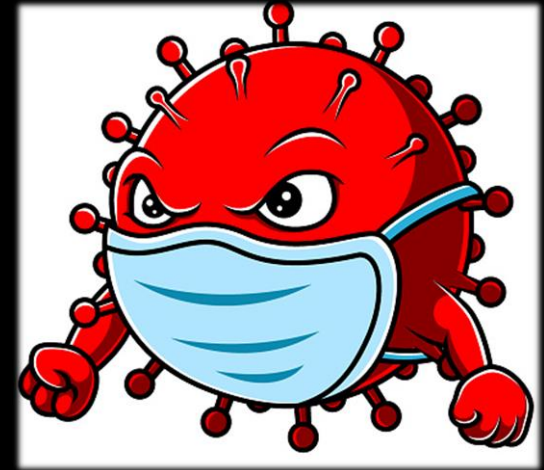
- 62% of health care professionals reported exposure to workplace violence





# prevalence

- COVID-19
  - workplace violence against nurses is a significant global health problem
  - incidents of violence increasing in frequency since COVID-19 pandemic began<sup>5</sup>
  - SafeWork Australia estimates there has been 400% increase in aggression and occupational violence since the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>4</sup>



4. NSW Government Webpage, accessed 15 Oct 2023 . <https://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/stories/mental-health-at-work-blogs/hard-hitting-truth-behind-workplace-violence>

5. International Council of Nurses, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Hospital Federation, & World Medical Association. 2022. *Violence against health care: Current practices to prevent, reduce or mitigate violence against health care*. [https://www.ihf-fih.org/download\\_doc\\_file.php?doc=e86a004c2d4dfe2341080e1f2bd8e3b2](https://www.ihf-fih.org/download_doc_file.php?doc=e86a004c2d4dfe2341080e1f2bd8e3b2)

# impact

- negative impact on professionalism and quality of health service
- psychological stress, sleep disturbances, relationship breakdown
- reduction in productivity
- increased absenteeism
- resignations
- PTSD, depression, suicide<sup>6</sup>



6. Yosep I, Mardhiyah A, Hendrawati H, Hendrawati S. Interventions for reducing negative impacts of workplace violence among health workers: a scoping review. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*. 2023;16 1409-1421

# case study

...one day in March













# case study

...one day in March

...what would you do...

- a) de-escalate
- b) remove yourself from the situation
- c) call for assistance
- d) code white

EMERGENCY CODE LIST	
	<b>CODE BLUE</b>   Medical Emergency Adult <b>CODE 13</b>   Medical Emergency Pediatric
	<b>CODE RED</b>   Fire Emergency
	<b>CODE PINK</b>   Child Abduction (PATIENT)
	<b>CODE AMBER</b>   Child Abduction or Missing (VISITOR)
	<b>CODE WHITE</b>   Urgent Security Request
	<b>CODE ORANGE</b>   Hazardous Materials
	<b>CODE GREEN</b>   Emergency Operations Plan Activation
	<b>ALL CLEAR</b>   Cancellation Notice
	<b>OVERHEAD</b>   Security Alert
	<b>OVERHEAD</b>   Weather Emergency



# case study

...one day in March

...what actually happened...

- a) de-escalate
- b) remove yourself from the situation
- c) call for assistance
- d) code white













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...one day in March

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# case study

...one day in March

...what should happen...

- a) IMS (incident management)
- b) reporting to nursing management
- c) debrief
- d) resolution
- e) support/EAP



# case study

...one day in March

...what actually happened...

- a) IMS (incident management) **by infusion team**
- b) reported to **lead physician**
- c) debrief **with direct team**
- d) resolution **determined by medical director**
- e) support



# managing risk and creating safety

individual

organisational

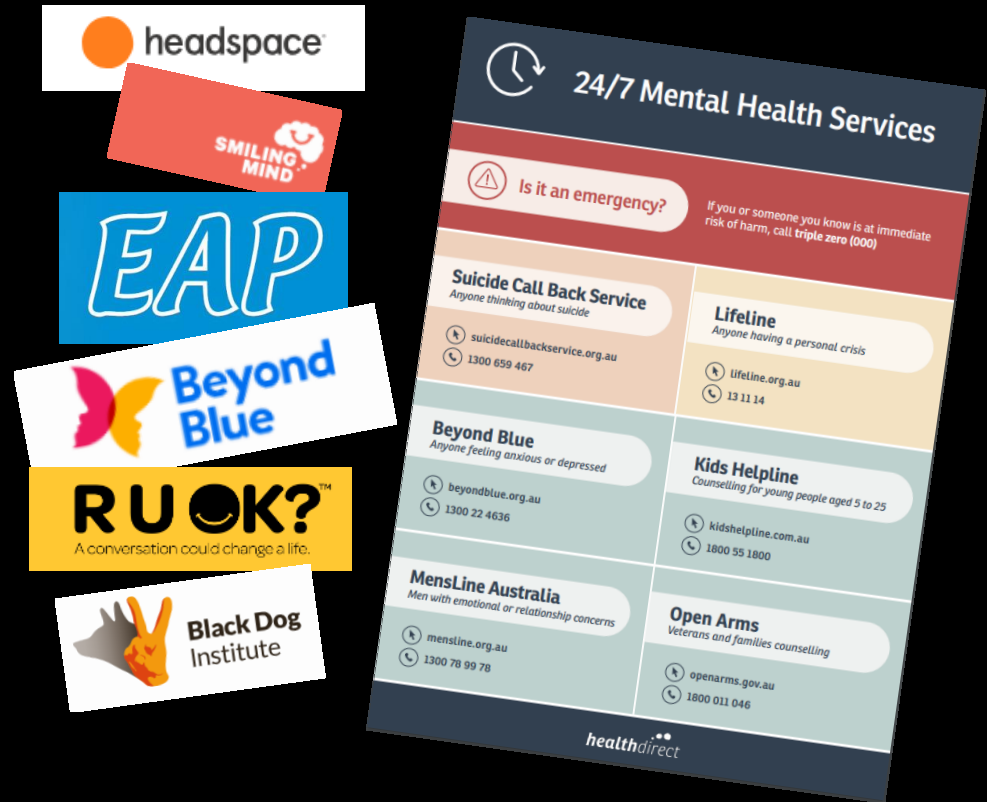




# managing risk and creating safety

## individual

- create opportunities to talk and listen
- early identification of risk
- build a positive and inclusive culture
- support help seeking
- create a peer support network
- psychology/cognitive behavioural therapy<sup>7,8</sup>



7. Health Direct Webpage –accessed 18 Oct 2023 - <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-resources#illness>

8. NSW Government Webpage - accessed 18 October 2023 - <https://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/managing-mental-health-your-workplace/how-to-create-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/take-action-to-be-a-mentally-healthy-workplace#toc-support-early-help-seeking-and-recovery>

# managing risk and creating safety

## organisational

- mental health training
- identify workplace factors and hazards
- develop role clarity
- ensure work is appropriate for skill and experience
- monitor workload and review resources
- zero tolerance to workplace violence
- make changes in phases<sup>8</sup>

8. NSW Government Webpage - accessed 18 October 2023 - <https://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/managing-mental-health-your-workplace/how-to-create-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/take-action-to-be-a-mentally-healthy-workplace#toc-support-early-help-seeking-and-recovery>



# managing risk and creating safety

phase 1 – communication

phase 2 – reviewing work practices

phase 3 – implementing change

phase 4 – evaluation and review

- group email
- pre-clinic morning huddle
- post-clinic meeting
- clinic information sheet
- redesigning webpage
- communication pathways
- set expectations
- empower patients

- site visits
- pt. survey
- pt. needs self-identified
- nurse-led clinic
- staff ratio/workload review
- business case
- education skill building



# summary

- defined workplace violence
- prevalence
- impact
- managing risk and creating safety
- resources



**"I did then what I knew how to do.  
Now that I know better, I do better."**

~ Maya Angelou

