Verbal Abuse on the Job Makes RNs Seek New Employment

A study of newly licensed RNs (NLRNs) has found that nurses who are verbally abused by nursing colleagues report lower job satisfaction, unfavorable perceptions of their work environment, and greater intent to leave their current job. The study, conducted by the RN Work Project, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was published online in the Journal of Nursing Scholarship.

Researchers surveyed 1,407 NLRNs about how often they were verbally abused by nurse colleagues: never (low level); one to five times in the past 3 months (moderate); or more than five times in the past 3 months (high). They found that nearly half (49%) of respondents experienced some verbal abuse, although only 5% had experienced abuse more than five times in the past 3 months. Being spoken to in a condescending manner and being ignored were the most frequently reported types of abuse. RNs working in Magnet hospitals and those working in intensive care units were the least likely to report high levels of verbal abuse.

RNs working day shifts experienced higher levels of verbal abuse than those working evening and weekend shifts. RNs working 8-hour shifts were less likely to experience abuse than RNs working 12-hour shifts. Staffing shortfalls were also correlated with higher levels of abuse.

The study revealed that intent to leave a job was highly correlated with the levels of abuse new RNs experienced. RNs who reported no verbal abuse were least likely to plan to leave in the next 3 years. Those who experienced moderate to high levels of abuse were most likely to say they intended to leave in the next 12 months but also indicated that they planned to leave their current positions, not the field of nursing.

The researchers noted that there is a need for evidence-based strategies to decrease and eliminate verbal abuse and to help new nurses cope with abuse, including structured interventions. They suggest that therapeutic communication, assertiveness training, and conflict management strategies may help new nurses cope with perceived abuse. The researchers recommend mandatory hospital-wide programs for all employees about the impact of verbal abuse, and other disruptive behaviors, and zero-tolerance policies.


Students’ Impulsive Behavior Tempered with Breathing-Based Program

In May, the Los Angeles school board voted to ban suspensions of students for “willful defiance” and directed school officials to use alternative disciplinary practices. The question remains: How do you discipline rowdy students and keep them in the classroom while still being fair to other kids who want to learn?

A team from the University of California Los Angeles’ Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior conducted a study on the Youth

Comic Book Addresses Co-Occurring Addictions & Mental Disorders

People Recover, a new resource from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, uses a comic book format to tell the story of two people, Hal and Nikki, who abuse substances and who are also affected by anxiety and depression, respectively. Because of their co-occurring addictions and mental disorders, their relationship suffers, and they struggle in their professional work. Each also faces a personal crisis. With the help of friends, professionals, and each other, Hal and Nikki begin their individual paths to recovery.

People Recover, in its easy-to-read comic book format, presents a hopeful message of recovery for individuals with a substance use disorder and a mental illness. It can be downloaded from http://store.samhsa.gov/product/People-Recover/SMA13-4712.

Empowerment Seminar, or YES!, a workshop for adolescents that teaches them to manage stress, regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts, and control impulsive behavior.

The YES! program, run by the non-profit International Association for Human Values, includes yoga-based breathing practices, among other techniques, and the research findings show that a little bit of breathing can go a long way. The scientists report that students who went through the 4-week YES! for Schools program felt less impulsive, while students in a control group who did not participate in the program showed no change. The study appears in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

For the study, students ages 14 to 18 from three Los Angeles--area high schools were invited to participate between spring 2010 and fall 2011. In total, 788 students participated—524 in the YES! program and 264 in the control group. The program was taught during the students’ physical education courses for 4 consecutive weeks. Students were asked to fill out questionnaires to rate statements about their impulsive behavior—for example, “I act without thinking” and “I feel self-control most of the time”—directly before and directly after the program. The students who did not go through the program also completed the questionnaires.

The YES! program is composed of three modules focused on healthy body, healthy mind, and healthy lifestyle. The healthy body module consists of physical activity that includes yoga stretches, mindful eating processes, and interactive discussions about food and nutrition. The healthy mind module includes stress-management and relaxation techniques, including yoga-based breathing practices, yoga poses, and meditation to relax the nervous system, bring awareness to the moment, and enhance concentration. Group processes promote personal responsibility, respect, honesty, and service to others. In the healthy lifestyle module, students learn strategies for handling challenging emotional and social situations, especially peer pressure. Mindful decision-making and leadership skills are taught via interactive games. Students also create a group community-service project, applying their newly learned skills toward that goal.

To follow up on results from this study, the National Institute on Drug Abuse has awarded the team a grant to examine the effects of the YES! program by using functional magnetic resonance imaging to study the brain circuitry that is important for self-control and emotion regulation. The project also aims to examine how the YES! program can reduce cravings among teen smokers.


**Pennsylvania Police Officers Trained for Mental Illness Crises**

Department of Corrections (DOC) officials in Pennsylvania have trained more than 100 employees in the area of crisis intervention since December 2012, with a goal of eventually providing training to all employees who have day-to-day contact with inmates with mental health issues. In addition to DOC staff, officials plan to offer the course at no cost to all Pennsylvania counties with jails.

Crisis Intervention is a frontline response to mental illness that can be used by all classifications of corrections employees. The training provides tools, strategies, and techniques that will allow these employees to work together to implement comprehensive services for inmates with mental illness. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) concept has been used by the Memphis Police Department in Tennessee since 1988, and has proven to decrease arrests and the use of force incidents, as well as reduce the use of restraints in emergency departments. The article by Loucks in the July issue of the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* describes a similar program in California and how nurses can help educate officers.

Pennsylvania DOC’s 4-day training reinforces skills taught previously to employees during basic training and on-the-job training. It also provides them with a better understanding of mental illness and ways to de-escalate situations that could become quickly volatile if not handled appropriately. The training uses role-playing, videos, and lectures to educate employees about:

- The history of mental illness over the centuries.
- Problems encountered with mentally ill inmates in prisons.
- An overview of medications used to treat mental illness and possible side effects.
- Communication skills to prevent, intervene, and de-escalate situations.
- Strategic plans for working with those with mental illness as well as their family members and advocates.

![Photo of jail](http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/note-to-teens-just-breathe-246556.aspx)
Anorexia-Related Anxiety Eased with Estrogen Replacement Therapy

Estrogen replacement therapy is associated with a significant decrease in anxiety symptoms among girls with anorexia nervosa, according to study results presented at the Endocrine Society’s annual meeting.

In this study, investigators found that anxiety scores on a standardized questionnaire decreased as estrogen levels increased. This relationship was unaffected by weight gain. Additionally, if weight gain did occur, estrogen replacement appeared to prevent a worsening of attitudes toward body image and food, as assessed using the Eating Disorders Inventory-Il questionnaire.

Participants included 72 teenage girls diagnosed with anorexia nervosa. At the start of the study, all were between ages 13 and 18 and had a measured bone age of at least 15 years.

Investigators randomly assigned participants to receive estrogen or placebo for 18 months. Of the 72 initial participants, 38 received estrogen and 34 received placebo. At the study’s start and end, participants completed questionnaires designed to assess anxiety and attitudes toward eating and body image. Thirty-seven participants completed the study, with 20 receiving estrogen and 17 receiving placebo.


doi:10.3928/02793695-20130807-99

Ritalin Studied as Method to Improve Self-Control & Craving in Cocaine Addiction

A single dose of a commonly prescribed attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) drug helps improve brain function in cocaine addiction, according to results of an imaging study published in JAMA Psychiatry.

Methylphenidate (Ritalin®) modified connectivity in certain brain circuits that underlie self-control and craving among cocaine-addicted individuals. Previous research has shown that oral methylphenidate improved brain function in cocaine users performing specific cognitive tasks such as ignoring emotionally distracting words and resolving a cognitive conflict. Similar to cocaine, methylphenidate increases dopamine (and norepinephrine) activity in the brain, but, administered orally, takes longer to reach peak effect, consistent with a lower potential for abuse. By extending dopamine’s action, the drug enhances signaling to improve several cognitive functions, including information processing and attention.

The study team recruited 18 cocaine-addicted individuals, who were randomized to receive an oral dose of methylphenidate or placebo. The researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging to measure the strength of connectivity in particular brain circuits known to play a role in addiction before and during peak drug effects. They also assessed each participant’s severity of addiction to see if this had any bearing on the results.

Methylphenidate decreased connectivity between areas of the brain that have been strongly implicated in the formation of habits, including compulsive drug seeking and craving. The scans also showed that methylphenidate strengthened connectivity between several brain regions involved in regulating emotions and exerting control over behaviors—connections previously reported to be disrupted in cocaine addiction. The benefits of methylphenidate were present after only one dose, indicating that this drug has significant potential as a treatment add-on for addiction to cocaine and possibly other stimulant agents.