MANDATING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE TRAINING FOR NURSING STUDENTS

To the Editor:

Regarding Martinez’s (2017) article, “Implementing a Workplace Violence Simulation for Undergraduate Nursing Students: A Pilot Study,” which appeared in the October 2017 issue of the Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services, it is well known that many workers in the health care field, such as nurses and nursing support technicians, undergo a great risk of encountering workplace violence (WPV). As nursing students train, they visit many clinical rotation sites, putting them at a higher risk of encounters with situations of WPV (Magnavita & Heponiemi, 2011). Martinez’s (2017) study was conducted using evidence-based scenarios that nursing students may encounter throughout their health care profession. The American Nurses Association (ANA) recommended mandating that nurses undergo a simulation of WPV (Martinez, 2017). This recommendation was made to enhance nursing students’ knowledge about evidence-based interventions to manage and prevent WPV. Mandating simulations of WPV will help improve nursing students’ critical thinking skills, assessment skills, and their ability to work while interacting with agitated patients.

A limitation of Martinez’s (2017) study is that there were 12 female nurses and only three male nurses. This limitation is crucial to this type of study (i.e., one on WPV and whom it may affect) because participants’ gender may influence their views on the aggression and violence they experienced during the simulation. An article by Sakellaropoulos, Pires, Estes, and Jasinski (2011) stated that female certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) experience aggression in the workplace more often than male CRNAs, with the largest percentage of aggressive incidents occurring against CRNAs ages 21 to 39.

One implication of Martinez’s (2017) study is that WPV training should be held for all nursing students, not just nursing students who are in a psychiatric rotation. Nurses in different specialties may encounter WPV. Martinez (2017) argued that WPV training programs should be mandatory to address the factors that contribute to WPV. Martinez’s argument is supported by a study by Schablon et al. (2012), which found that the better nurses are trained, the better they handle WPV situations. WPV training is essential to nurses in all areas of health care. The more training for WPV that nursing students receive, including simulations of violent scenarios, the better prepared they will be if they encounter a real-life scenario.

REFERENCES


Nicole Garhartt
Health Studies
Utica College
Utica, New York

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Reply:

Thank you for your valuable input regarding workplace violence (WPV) against nurses and the implementation of training programs in nursing schools to mitigate this phenomenon.

In response to the highlighted limitations, I acknowledge the gender gap that occurred during the pilot study, and I agree with the fact that it was possible that female participants’ experiences dealing with agitated behaviors may have differed significantly from the experiences of their male counterparts. However, this pilot study reflects current trends in nursing student body population. A biennial survey conducted across nursing schools in the United States by the National League for Nursing (2015) during the academic year 2013-2014 showed significant gender gaps. The results showed that female students accounted for 85% and male students accounted for only 15% of student enrollment in BSN.
programs. Although it may be difficult to attain an equally balanced gender cohort among nursing students, it is strongly suggested that researchers attempt to have an equal number of participants according to gender relative to the population when conducting research. Researching outcome differences and similarities following a simulation on WPV between male and female nursing students is also suggested.

Furthermore, gender may be a significant risk factor for encountering incidents of WPV. Ridenour et al. (2015) evaluated risk factors leading to aggression toward nursing staff at eight acute locked psychiatric units in the United States. The authors reported no statistical significance in incidents of aggression in relation to gender among all respondents (Ridenour et al., 2015). On the contrary, a systematic review on WPV conducted by Edward, Ousey, Warelow, and Lui (2014) highlighted the fact that male nurses were more likely to experience incidents of WPV. A meta-analysis performed by Edward et al. (2016) to assess factors relating to aggression perpetrated by patients and visitors against nurses and health care workers showed that male nurses were 18% more likely to be physically assaulted than female nurses.

The phenomenon of WPV is a serious global concern impacting nurses and nursing students across different nursing disciplines. Garhartt’s example regarding female certified registered nurse anesthetists experiencing WPV demonstrates that this phenomenon affects even graduate-prepared nurses. Pompeii et al. (2015) conducted a study to assess violent incidents at six different hospitals in the United States for a 12-month period, demonstrating that nurses and nurse practitioners had encountered incidents of WPV. The researchers discovered that among health care workers who provide direct patient care, nurses had the highest prevalence of injuries in the workplace (Pompeii et al., 2015).

I concur with the suggestion of providing educational training about management and prevention of WPV to all nursing students. Edward et al. (2016) reported that psychiatric nurses have a higher likelihood of physical assault by patients or visitors than nurses not working in psychiatric settings. The pilot study was in line with evidence and recommendations found in the literature to combat WPV. The pilot study was conducted at the selected university aiming to assess the feasibility and student benefits of implementing a WPV training program in the psychiatric course. Plans to educate future nursing students at various levels and expand the WPV program within the institution's nursing curricula are ongoing. I emphasize the need to develop and implement training programs to manage and prevent incidents of WPV in undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula.

REFERENCES


Angel J. Solorzano Martinez, DNP, MSN, MBA, RN, CNS
Saint Francis Memorial Hospital and California Pacific Medical Center
Samuel Merritt University, San Francisco State University, and University of San Francisco
San Francisco, California

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