A Pilot Study of Violence on Emergency Department Nurses in Taipei

Cheuk-Sing Choy1,2, Hung-Yi Chiou3, Wen-Ta Chiu4, Yu-Wen Huang1, Khoot-Peng Cheah2, Yaw-Ching Chen5, Hung-Tsung Chou1

1Department of Emergency Medicine, Taipei Medical University-Wan Fang Hospital; 2Department of Emergency Medicine, Taipei Medical University Hospital; 3Institute and Department of Public Health, Taipei Medical University; 4Department of Neurosurgery, Taipei Medical University-Wan Fang Hospital; 5Taipei County Hospital

ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Violent events in the emergency department (ED) on the nursing staff have become a major issue for the improvement of health care safety in the work place. We investigated the percentage of nursing staff critically assaulted in the Taipei, Taiwan area during a 1-year period, and discussed the reasons for the violence on the ED nursing staff.

Methods: Subjects in this study were chosen randomly from various levels of the ED according to the department of health of the Taipei city government and the public health bureau of the Taipei county government. The chosen samples were stratified sampling. The nursing staff from the ED and intensive care unit (ICU) were in the study from February 2006 through May 2006.

Results: The findings of the violence experienced by the ED nursing staff were more serious than expected. The prevalence of the violent attacks suffered by the ED and ICU nursing staff within the year were 65.1% and 33.6%, respectively. Moreover, the violence mostly came from the patient himself/herself or from the family members of the patients. The nursing staff were attacked using objects such as the patients' medical history reports. In addition, alcohol and drug abuse were potential risk factors in the patients (P<0.05). The main areas of the violent attacks were the triage area (66.4%) and the observation area (44.3%). The reasons for the violence included drunken patients, long wait times, and inappropriate communication and treatment between the patient and doctor.

Conclusion: Violence in the work place is very serious for the ED nursing staff. The results of this study are crucial and provide evidence of violence to authorities and interested groups who need to know that safety in the work place is a serious concern. Meanwhile the main motivation for doing this study was to keep the ED nursing staff safe and away from the violence.

Keywords: emergency department nursing staff, violence, prevalence

INTRODUCTION

Due to the reports of violence in the emergency department (ED) of hospitals in Taiwan, it has become a hot issue regarding public health concerns. Violent attacks are one of the primary causes of ED nursing staff resigning from their jobs. Every day violent events occur.1 In 1999, Perrone conducted an investigation on the system of Australian Workers Compensation Association and unexpectedly discovered that the nursing staff suffered from violence much more than police officers or prison guards.2 Moreover from 1992 through 1995, applications of compensation increased 6.8%3 and violent attacks occurred to the ED nursing staff almost every week. Obviously the violence issue has already become a very critical and serious problem in the ED working environment.

At the International Nursing Conference (International Council of Nurses, ICN) held in 2005, members pointed out that 72% of nursing staff felt insecure in their work place, and even suffered violent attacks at a