

THE TOLL OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT STAFF IN ISRAEL DR. STANISLAV LIFSHITZ

Background: Violence towards emergency department staff is common and pervasive across the world, and affects their physical and mental well-being. ED staff exposed to violence may feel unsafe, alter their patient interactions detrimentally, miss work days and consider career changes.

Methods: In this study we gathered information in the form of questionnaires from ED staff across different Israeli hospitals to evaluate the toll violence takes on ED staff, its perceived causes and the adequacy of violence reduction strategies currently in place.

Results: Of surveyed staff, 93% experienced verbal violence, 58.8% experienced threats and 21.3% experienced physical violence firsthand. 66.25% have not attended any workshop or training on verbal de-escalation, communication skills or breakaway skills. 67.5% changed their behavior due to violent events and 40% considered a change in their careers.

Conclusion: Exposure by staff in the ED to some kind of violence is very common. The causes of violence were believed to be overcrowding and understaffing in the ED, cultural norms that enable violence, communication failure, lack of staff training in violence prevention and de-escalation and staff behavior in descending order of importance. Training in prevention and in coping with ED violence is essential.

Cause \ Effect	none	a little	a lot
Cultural norms that enable violence	8.8%	33.8%	56.3%
ER overcrowding and long waiting times	2.5%	31.3%	65.8%
Communication barriers and failure	18.8%	48.8%	31.3%
Insufficient staff training in violence prevention	35.0%	42.5%	21.3%
Inappropriate staff behavior	53.8%	41.3%	3.8%

	Mean \pm std. dev.
feel safe from violence	2.42 \pm 1.06
feel prepared	2.01 \pm 1.00
quality of preparation	2.19 \pm 0.97

Effect on staff member	% Reported
avoiding threatening patients	61.3%
avoiding patients in enclosed spaces	18.8%
decreased work satisfaction	37.5%
fear, anxiety and insecurity	30.0%
feeling sad or depressed	21.3%
considering self-harm	10.0%

