

What are the consequences of workplace violence in the health sector?

October 10 2014



Exposure to violence in the workplace can lead to serious consequences for health sector employees say Stéphane Guay and Nathalie Lanctôt of the Institut universitaire de santé mentale and the University of Montreal, who studied this issue in a systematic review of the literature. "This sector is particularly prone to violence since health personnel are 16 times more likely to be victims of or witnesses to acts of violence compared to other public service personnel," explains Guay, who heads the Centre d'étude sur le trauma and the VISAGE team. "Most of these acts are committed by patients or their relatives and can cause many adverse effects. However, to date, no literature review has identified all the consequences that victims or witnesses of workplace violence may face."

After a rigorous selection process, 68 studies were included in the review. The results revealed seven types of [consequences](#) that may result from acts of workplace violence:

1. Physical consequences
2. Psychological consequences
3. Emotional consequences
4. Consequences related to functioning at work (e.g., sick leave)
5. Consequences on patient relationships and quality of care provided to patients
6. Social consequences (e.g., family life, sense of insecurity)
7. Financial consequences

It appears that psychological and emotional aspects (e.g., anger, fear) are the factors on which violence has the most negative impact. Victims suffer from post-traumatic stress (between 5% and 32% according to four studies), increased vigilance, irritability, and sleep disorders. Some authors also note depressive symptoms but with a percentage lower than 20% in most cases.

Regarding emotional aspects, 25 of the 68 studies reported at least one consequence of this type. Anger, fear, sadness, and disgust were symptoms that occurred most often.

Consequences at the professional level were also significant, since between 13% and 60% of victims considered leaving their jobs after an act of violence, according to 12 of the 68 studies.

Ten of the sixty-eight studies also reported consequences in terms of quality of care. Included in these consequences were developing a sense of fear toward patients in general, loss of pleasure in working with patients, and less time spent with patients.

"These results demonstrate that the consequences of workplace violence are not only profound but also multiple," concludes Lanctôt, of the University of Montreal's School of Criminology. "However, since the results are mostly from retrospective studies, further research is required in terms conducting longitudinal studies to better understand the long-term effects of [workplace violence](#)."

More information: Lanctôt N. & Guay S. (2014). "The aftermath of workplace violence among healthcare workers: A systematic literature review of the consequences," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19, 492–501, doi :10.1016/j.avb.2014.07.010.

Provided by University of Montreal

Citation: What are the consequences of workplace violence in the health sector? (2014, October 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-consequences-workplace-violence-health-sector.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.