D28   Developing a Valid Data Base for Determining Crime Trends in Hospitals

Anthony N. Potter, BS*, International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety, 3208 Shorewood Drive, Suite 139, Mercer Island, WA

The goal of this presentation is to acquaint the forensic community with the problem of hospital-based crime and the current initiatives by the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety (IAHSS) to develop a valid database to measure criminal activity, to detect crime trends, and ultimately to measure the effectiveness of hospital security programs.

This paper will first discuss the problem and extent of criminal activity at hospitals throughout the U.S. It will focus on the lack of a valid database for measuring such activity, and previous efforts to develop one using statistics collected by the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety (IAHSS) and by the U.S. Department of Education under the Clery Act. The former is flawed because participation is voluntary and varies substantially from year to year, and the latter only includes academic medical centers (those affiliated with colleges and universities required to report campus crime).

The paper will then discuss the IAHSS current initiative, which is designed to obtain crime data from a statistically valid random sampling of hospitals over a ten-year period. The sampling design stratified hospitals based on three variables: bed size (staffed, not licensed), type (general, trauma center, public "safety net" and pediatric), and location (urban and suburban). Hospitals with less than 100 beds have been excluded, since they are typically in rural areas and do not have established security programs. This 3x4x2 matrix totals 24 hospitals. Multiplied by the five IAHSS regions in the U.S., this will provide survey data from a total of 120 hospitals.

All 120 hospitals selected have committed to provide annual crime statistics in a standardized format for a period of ten years. In addition, information regarding their security personnel (number of officers and support staff, level of training, type of vehicles and equipment, patrol methods, etc.), programs (crime prevention, investigations, etc.), and use of technology (access controls, alarms, CCTV, etc.) will be collected. This data will enable the IAHSS to measure the effectiveness of security personnel, programs, and technology in reducing crime in hospitals.

Participating hospitals have been promised anonymity so that their individual crime statistics and security resources will not be publicized. However, the IAHSS will release an annual report to acquaint hospital administrators, law enforcement officials, the academic community, and the general public with criminal activity, crime trends, and security programs in hospitals.

Crime, Hospital, Statistics