



D18 Management of Volatile Scenarios Within the Hospital Emergency Department

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The goal of this presentation is to outline the elements of a Code Green Response Program and to demonstrate its value in the management and control of behavioral crises and interpersonal violence within the Emergency Department (ED).

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by identifying potentially unstable situations that might escalate to acts of violence and prompt initiation of a definitive Code Green action plan can combine to eliminate ignition factors, thus deescalating or defusing potentially dangerous situations.

The Emergency Department is the most likely hospital area to become the scene for workplace violence. Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and those who are unable to control verbal and physical aggression are thrust into a confining space with many other ill and injured patients. Psycho-social problems, mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse, frustrations associated with access to medical care and physical illness often combine and eventually reach an ignition point within the hectic environs of the ED.

During busy times, workloads are heavy, patient waiting times may be excessively long and human stress tolerances reach the limit. Furthermore, the trend to treat larger numbers of mental health patients on an out-patient basis results in their migration to Emergency Departments when they become overly anxious, seriously depressed or perceive a loss of control. Many medications for patients with conditions such as hypertension, thyroid problems, neurological disorders and pain can also aggravate certain adverse behavioral phenomena. With the right combination of precipitating events, ignition factors and loss of self-control, violence will erupt and anyone within the area can be seriously injured or killed. The abilities of staff members to anticipate potentially unstable patients at triage, and to take definitive steps to defuse anger and aggression are vital in preventing catastrophic consequences for patients and caregivers.

Unique knowledge and skills possessed by forensic nurses make them ideal candidates for workplace violence task forces and response teams. They are acutely attuned to detection of suspicious circumstances and promptly recognize a dangerous scenario. In addition, forensic nurses are accustomed to working collaboratively with other disciplines. Perhaps most important however, is that from their clinical acumen, they know that violence can quickly escalate from verbal abuse to homicide. Unlike most other healthcare personnel, forensic nurses actually believe that workplace violence is a real threat to their safety and life.

This poster will present the criteria for initiation of the Code Green Response and illustrate the specific roles and responsibilities of medical and nursing personnel, hospital police and others who combine to control patient behavior, limit the zone of danger and protect patients, personnel and others from acts of violence, hostage scenarios, and emotional terrorism. The provisions of regulatory guidance (Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, Occupational Safety and Health Act), federal statutes, and other applicable laws will also be addressed.

The Code Green Response Program as well as specific staff education and training have resulted in successful management of impending and actual volatile scenarios at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Exemplary case studies will be illustrated. An environmental assessment tool, including the hospital environs and community social pattern, will be suggested as a significant component of an initial planning strategy for developing a response to workplace violence.

Code Green Response, Workplace Violence, Forensic Nurses