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Review

Violence towards emergency nurses: A narrative review of theories and frameworks

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Workplace Violence in the health environment is a growing issue worldwide. Emergency department have been identified as a high-risk setting for Workplace Violence and emergency nurses are most exposed to this phenomenon. To address workplace violence in the ED effectively, it is critical to understand frameworks established in the literature to assist in development of appropriate interventions and corrective measures. An overview of available theories of violence towards emergency nurses in the literature is presented herein in the format of a narrative review.

Methods: A search of international literature on WPV theories was conducted in three databases: PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Proquest Central. Articles concerning theories that have direct implications for patient-related violence (client-on-worker Type 2 Violence) in the emergency department were sought.

Results: Four hundred and fifty-nine articles were found. Applying established inclusion and exclusion criteria, fourteen of these were included in the review. In the international literature there are 24 theories and frameworks pertaining to violence towards nurses in the emergency department which describe different intervention strategies based on these.

Discussion: Both the theories on violence developed by nurses and those derived from other disciplines are complex and many key elements are invariably intertwined. Understanding such theories might be useful to manage violence towards emergency nurses with greater effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Workplace Violence (WPV) in the health environment is a growing issue worldwide [1], so that, in view of the severe and relevant consequences, many important international organizations rank at the top of the global public health agenda [2,3]. In particular, the emergency department has been identified as a high-risk setting for WPV [4] and emergency nurses are the most exposed to this phenomenon [5,6]. Several studies focus on this specific topic, as evidenced by the growing production of scientific research on the subject (Fig. 1). However, despite the fact that WPV phenomenon is well described in the literature, several authors believe this is still an understudied research field [7], especially with reference to specific actions designed to address or reduce WPV [8] or the evaluation of intervention effectiveness [9,10]. The relevance of such statements regarding the issue of WPV in the emergency department is definitely highlighted by important systematic reviews [11–13], or secondary literature articles on the topic [14,15]. The purpose of this manuscript is to present, through a narrative review of the literature, the theories on violence towards health professionals developed to date, particularly those related to patients, their family members, and visitors (client-on-worker violence or Type 2 as classified by the University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center) [16] in ED. The rationale underlying this review is that deep and critical knowledge of the phenomenon is needed in order to effectively address the WPV in emergency department, with future actions. In the absence of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions adopted to date, basing actions intended to mitigate violence on solid theories may prove to be a valid strategy for managing WPV.

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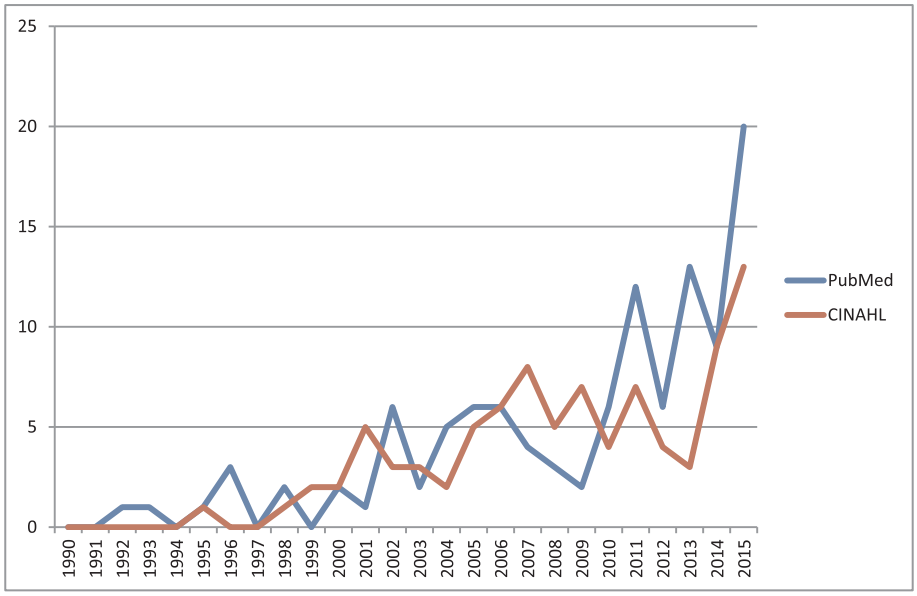

Fig. 1. Studies indexed on PubMed and CINAHL about Violence towards the Emergency Nurses by year of publication. Source: PubMed and CINAHL Databases. Access 23 June 2016. PubMed search details: ("workplace violence" [MeSH Terms] OR ("workplace" [All Fields] AND "violence" [All Fields]) OR "workplace violence" [All Fields]) AND ("emergencies" [MeSH Terms] OR "emergencies" [All Fields] OR "emergency" [All Fields]) AND ("nurses" [MeSH Terms] OR "nurses" [All Fields]). CINAHL Boolean/phase: workplace n1 violence AND emergency n1 nurses.

2. Methods

A preliminary search of the international literature on WPV theories was conducted in the PubMed database using the following search terms: "workplace violence", "theory", "framework" and "emergency". Similarly Google Scholar was searched for the grey literature. This allowed identification of key terms to be used in the search strategy. The final search was done between November 29 and December 4, 2016, in 4 electronic databases: PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Proquest Central. The query strings used in the databases were constructed using AND and OR Boolean operators, and quoted string (in PubMed), or Near operator N2 (in CINAHL) when descriptor terms were compound words (Table 1).

Studies were included in this review if the following inclusion criteria were met: 1) the article is published in English; 2) abstracts or full text are available; 3) the article concerned Type 2 Violence (client-on-worker); 4) the theories have direct implications with WPV in the emergency department; and 5) article published in peer-reviewed journals. No time limit was applied regarding the date of publication of the articles because the intent is to identify all WPV theories elaborated over time.

3. Results

The search carried out in PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Proquest Central produced respectively 110, 43, 86, and 217 papers (27 are present in more than one database), for a total of 429 articles. A preliminary review of the literature for inclusion was conducted independently by two investigators (NR and AC) by reading the title of the article for relevancy (177 papers), followed by examining the abstract (18 papers), and, finally, by a review of the full text. Applying the inclusion criteria, we selected 15 studies on explanatory theories of violence towards ED workers (Fig. 2). A synopsis of the selected studies is shown in Table 2.

3.1. Poyner and Warne's model of workplace violence

The first theoretical framework shown was addressed in the article of Whittington, Shuttleworth, and Hill [17], and was developed by Poyner and Warne in 1986 [18], who assume that the situational and interpersonal factors are crucial in the generation of anger and violence. Their model identifies five main characteristics of any violent act occurring in a work setting: the assailant, the employee, the situation, the type of interaction that took place between the assailant and the employee prior to the assault, and the outcome. Whittington and colleagues adopted the interpersonal perspective based on Poyner & Warne's model of WPV in their study conducted in 1996 with the intention of estimating the prevalence of violence to staff in a general hospital setting (including the emergency department) and analysing reasons for WPV. The Poyner and Warne's model of WPV was used to build a profile of high-risk situations in general health care [19], and especially in psychiatric settings [20].

3.2. Ecological occupational health model of workplace assault

This model was used for the first time by Levin, Hewitt, and Misner, to examine the multiple factors hypothesized as contributing to the verbal and physical assault of ED workers [21]. Three factors were identified and found to be strongly interrelated: the individual worker, the workplace, and the external environment. A further factor (the assault situation) was taken into consideration in a further development of this model by Levin, Hewitt, Misner, and Reynolds who analyze the

Table 1
Electronic search strategy.

Database	Entry terms/search strategy	Limits
PubMed	((model[All Fields] OR models[All Fields] OR (("violence"[MeSH Terms] OR "violence"[All Fields]) AND ("analysis"[Subheading] OR "analysis"[All Fields])) OR ("etiology"[Subheading] OR "etiology"[All Fields] OR "causality"[MeSH Terms] OR "causality"[All Fields]) OR concept[All Fields] OR concepts[All Fields] OR theory[All Fields] OR theories[All Fields] OR framework[All Fields] OR frameworks[All Fields]) AND ("workplace violence"[MeSH Terms] OR ("workplace"[All Fields] AND "violence"[All Fields]) OR "workplace violence"[All Fields])) AND ("emergencies"[MeSH Terms] OR "emergencies"[All Fields] OR "emergency"[All Fields])	None
CINAHL	(model OR models or violence N2 analysis OR etiology OR concept OR concepts OR theory OR theories OR framework OR frameworks) AND (workplace N2 violence) AND emergency	None

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