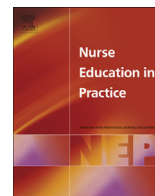




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A workplace violence educational program: A repeated measures study



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ABSTRACT

Violence against healthcare employees is a profound problem in the emergency department worldwide. One strategy to reduce the risk of violence is prevention focused education. The purpose of this paper was to report the learning outcomes of a workplace violence educational prevention program tailored to the needs of emergency department employees. A quasi-experimental design was used to determine the knowledge retention of program content following a hybrid (online and classroom) educational intervention. One hundred twenty emergency department employees that completed the workplace violence prevention program participated in the study. A repeated-measures analysis of variance was conducted to determine if individual test scores increased significantly between baseline, posttest, and six month posttest periods. The results indicated a significant time effect, Wilk's $\Lambda = .390$, $F(2, 118) = 26.554$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .310$. Follow-up polynomial contrasts indicated a significant linear effect with means increasing over time, $F(1, 119) = 53.454$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .310$, while individual test scores became significantly higher over time. It was concluded that the use of a hybrid modality increases the probability that significant learning outcomes and retention will be achieved.

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Introduction

Violence against healthcare employees is a profound problem in the emergency department setting worldwide (Albasha, 2013; Estry-Behar et al., 2008; International Labour Organization, International Council of Nurses, World Health Organization, & Public Services International, 2002; Knowles et al., 2013). Kowalenko et al. (2013) reported that on average an emergency department employee will experience 4.017 physical threats and 1.510 assaults per year. A primary prevention strategy, often recommended for preventing workplace violence (i.e., verbal abuse, threats, and assaults) from patients and visitors, is educational programming (Beech, 2008; Gates et al., 2011a,b; Gillespie et al., 2010; Hardin, 2012; Kowalenko et al., 2012; Nau et al., 2009). Before violence education becomes the mainstay of a comprehensive violence management program, it is important to determine if employees' knowledge increases from the educational content. The purpose of

this paper was to report the learning outcomes of a workplace violence educational prevention program tailored to the needs of emergency department employees.

Background

The authors found few descriptions of workplace violence educational programs in the peer-reviewed literature. Two exemplars of workplace violence educational programs were presented by Hartley et al. (2012) and Gillespie et al. (2012). The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of each program. Hartley et al. (2012) detailed an online violence program designed for healthcare employees. The program was described as a "mix of text, videos, and graphics to create an interactive learning experience" (Hartley et al., 2012, p.203). Because the authors did not provide program evaluation data for their program it was not possible to determine the degree to which employees learned the program content.

Gillespie et al. (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study comparing two educational treatment strategies: (1) online content and (2) online and classroom-based content. The researchers found that both groups had a significant increase in their learning of the violence program content. It was not reported if the emergency department employees were able to retain the new knowledge over time.

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There remains few reported workplace violence programs in the literature (Kynoch et al., 2011). The programs available provided evidence that short-term knowledge attainment occurs (Kynoch et al., 2011); however, there was a gap pertaining to the long term retention of violence program education. It was therefore important to determine if workplace violence program content could be maintained for a longer period of time (e.g., six months). If emergency department employees are not able to retain program content for extended periods of time, program content is not likely to affect a significant reduction in an incidence rate for workplace violence. This paper begins to fill the scientific gap by reporting the knowledge attainment (immediate posttest) and retention (six month posttest) of a workplace violence educational program delivered to emergency department employees.

Methods

Design

A quasi-experimental design was used to determine the knowledge retention of program content following a hybrid educational intervention. The hybrid modality included both online and classroom components. The researchers hypothesized that there would be a significant increase in learning retention for employees who completed the hybrid educational intervention as measured by program test scores. Institutional Review Board approval was granted from the University of Cincinnati and the two partnering hospital organizations.

Setting and sample

Participants were recruited from the emergency departments of two separate healthcare systems in the Midwest United States. One system was a pediatric specialty system with two emergency departments, one community based and the other a Level 1 pediatric trauma center. The other system was a university-affiliated, teaching system with a Level 1 adult/pediatric trauma center and emergency department.

The only inclusion criterion was that participants complete all components of the hybrid education offered to the employees during summer 2011. Eligible participants were nurses, social workers, child life specialists, and unlicensed assistive personnel (see Fig. 1 for attrition information). Completing the hybrid education was a requirement of the pediatric health system's new workplace violence policy and not specific to this study. Approximately 83% ($n = 197$) of 238 employees from the two pediatric emergency departments completed the training. Completing the hybrid education at the adult/pediatric system was required for members of the emergency department's core workplace violence team and optional for all other employees. Approximately 19% ($n = 30$) of 156 employees from the adult/pediatric emergency department participated.

Power analysis

A post hoc power calculation was determined using G*Power 3.0 (Faul et al., 2007). Given effect size .310, $\alpha = .05$, sample size 120, and three measurements per participant, our study yielded sufficient power (>95%) to conduct the planned data analyses.

Workplace violence program

Employees received a revised iteration of a hybrid educational program with online and classroom components designed to

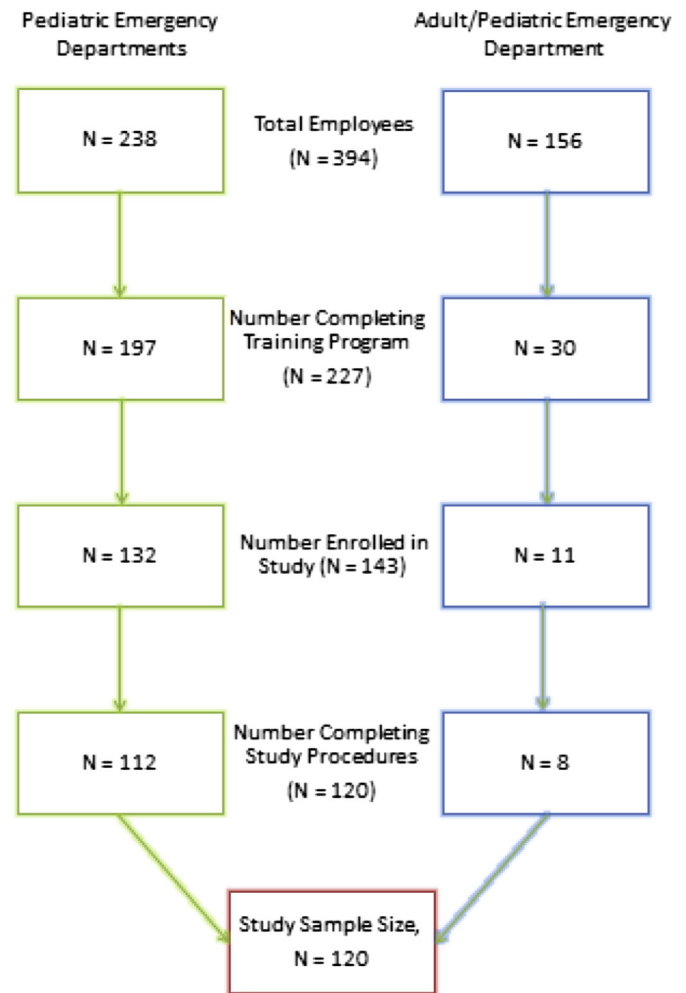


Fig. 1. Attrition chart.

inform emergency department employees about workplace violence by patients and visitors. The first component included three asynchronous online modules completed during June and July 2011. Module 1 focused on workplace violence prevention and included topics such as environmental safety, risk assessment, and communicating effectively with patients and visitors. Module 2 focused on safely managing workplace violence through a coordinated team approach. Module 3 focused on the post-incident response and included topics such as incident reporting and caring for victimized workers. Prior to starting Module 1, employees were prompted to complete a 20 question pretest on workplace violence. After completing Module 3, employees were prompted to complete a 20 question posttest on workplace violence. Questions were identical for the pretest and posttest. The answers were not given to participants. Employees were able to complete the training over multiple sittings with the program resuming where the employee last left the training.

The second component was an interactive two-hour classroom-based tabletop exercise during August/September 2011. For this component, employees watched a series of video vignettes depicting patient and visitor violence in the emergency department. This component prompted employees to discuss, apply, and collaborate with their interprofessional colleagues on how to best manage the incident of workplace violence depicted in each video vignette.

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