

Violence is pandemic among HSA members

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BY GERI GRIGG

HSA OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

On March 13, the Toronto Star printed an article calling the incidence of violence toward health and social services workers an epidemic.

HSA disagrees. The incidents of violence occurring in all HSA worksites, without a common cause is a pandemic.

An epidemic happens when a single cause of an outbreak is identified such as in an outbreak of salmonella traced to a single meal or *Cl. Difficile* from a hospital. If the source is identified and the cases managed, the outbreak can be contained.

Violence in HSA worksites is a pandemic. Emergency departments, psychiatric units and residential care facilities are at high risk because of the patient population they serve. Patients may be less able to control their emotions, are under tremendous stress and are less cognisant of what they are doing that might contribute to a higher risk for workers.

High-risk patients and clients cross the paths of HSA members in all our worksites: transition houses, child development centres, outpatient clinics and community health centres as well as acute and residential care.

Controlling a disease pandemic requires appropriate and sustained interventions. Controlling the violence pandemic requires the same.

That is why HSA has successfully lobbied the Ministry of Health to create a Provincial Violence Prevention Strategy and why we have pressured the health authorities to complete the training of members in high-risk areas and continue to advocate for training of all healthcare workers. HSA has filed grievances and supported OHS Stewards to complete 21-day recommendations under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. And finally, that is why we have raised the issue of Violence Prevention with the Community Social Services Sector to ensure workers are trained in prevention and the facilities in which they work are not just functional, but also reduce the risk of violent attacks.

UPDATE ON PROVINCIAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGY

The provincial government will shortly be releasing a new strategy to reduce violence against health care workers.

The strategy, crafted in consultation with HSA following HSA President Val Avery's 2015 call for a new approach to fight increased incidence of violence, is expected to be rolled out after the new provincial government is sworn in during the summer.

SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT ROYAL JUBILEE

Upgrades that have been under discussion for several months are now moving forward for Psychiatric Emergency Services at Royal Jubilee Hospital.

Renovations include a new nursing station with higher walls and improved sightlines, addition of a third secure room. The plan also includes staffing adjustments to add three additional nurses, one coordinator, one health care aide and one protection services officer.

The improvements are the result of a recent violence prevention risk assessment which involved several HSA members. Changes are expected to increase safety for staff but also improve service for patients and families.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017