

Violent & Aggressive Behaviour in Health Care & Social Assistance in BC, 2007

BACKGROUND

Why focus on Violent & Aggressive Behaviour in Health Care & Social Assistance?

British Columbia's health care sector employs approximately 240,000 workers- about 10% of the provincial workforce. Between 2003 and 2007, injured workers accounted for over 34,600 time-loss claims, almost 1.5 million days lost from work, and over \$208 million in claim costs.

In 2007, over 925 health workers lost time from work as the result of injuries caused by violent acts – approximately 12% of health care time-loss claims. Health workers are among the highest risk group for becoming a victim of violence while on the job. Nurse aides, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, psychiatric nurses, and community health workers are at highest risk for exposure to violence and make up 97% of these types of claims.

Acute care, long-term care and short-term care settings account for 82% of the locations where health workers are getting injured due to violence each year.

Because a large proportion of violent or aggressive patients have reduced cognitive abilities, this behaviour is accepted as part of the normal work environment. Research indicates that health workers significantly under report workplace violence incidents. As well, the potential exposure to violence is a significant factor contributing to many health workers' reported high-stress levels.

Patients with decreased cognitive abilities can become agitated during personal care activities. This agitation can result in aggressive or violent behaviour. Because the proportion of patients with dementia is anticipated to increase over the next few years, health workers will be at increased risk of injury from acts of aggressive and violent behaviour.

How frequently are health workers hurt by violence on the job?

- Each week in B.C., 18 time-loss claims were accepted for health workers due to violence in 2007
- There were 927 accepted claims due to acts of violence by health care workers in 2007 and many more go unreported
- Last year, over 770 female health workers were hurt on the job due to violence
- The average number of days lost by a health worker due to a violence claim in BC is 50 days

Definition: The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation, section 4.27, defines **violence** as “the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a workers, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker.” Violence also includes “any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury.”

All data is based on non-healthcare only claims.

Data Source 1: WorkSafeBC Statistical Services, June 2008

Data Source 2: WorkSafeBC Data Warehouse, June 30, 2008