

History of Violence Screening in a Psychiatric Emergency Center
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Problem: Patient violence against mental health workers is frequent and increasing. Staff injuries in the Psychiatric Emergency Center (PEC) at JPS Health Network led to the formation of a performance improvement team.

Evidence: A literature search was used to identify the extent of the problem and assess the success of other attempts to reduce violence, especially by using a form of risk assessment.

Strategy: The literature search showed that a history of violence is the most important factor in predicting the risk of future violence. The search also indicated that a simple risk assessment was more likely to be consistently used.

Practice Change: A simple history of violence assessment was designed and included in the nurse triage assessment protocol for each patient presenting to the PEC. A system was developed to alert all members of the treatment team of a patient's positive history of violence. There are two levels of alert based on protocol criteria. Patients rated a severe risk are flagged for all visits to JPS Health Network.

Evaluation: Incidents of patient violence against staff before and after the implementation of the alert system were compared.

Results: There was a 29% reduction in the 23 months following implementation of the history of violence screening and alert protocol compared to the 23 months before implementation.

Recommendations: Although there was a measurable decrease in violence against staff, the history of violence based alert system did not prevent all such incidents. These results and other studies show that while a history of violence assessment can be an accurate predictor of future violence, this alone will not eliminate patient violence. An alert system must be part of a larger framework that addresses all aspects of violence prevention.

Bibliography

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