Provincial Violence Prevention Curriculum

Module 3 - Interventions in Acute Care

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This Violence Prevention Curriculum was developed as a project of the Provincial Violence Prevention Steering Committee (PVPSC) to fill a need for effective, recommended and provincially-recognized violence prevention training for all British Columbia healthcare workers across a range of care settings, including affiliate organizations. The Curriculum includes eight online and five classroom modules.

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- Occupational Health and Safety
- Social work
- Healthcare Violence Prevention programs
- Geriatric care
- Nursing
- Psychiatry
- Physical strategies and team response training

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COURSE OVERVIEW

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Since health care workers have a high level of exposure to occupational violence, it is important that you recognize the risk for violence early on and respond appropriately. This will help you to:

- Protect yourself
- Reduce the likelihood that violence will occur
- Reduce the severity of a violent incident

In this module, Interventions in Acute Care, you will learn about risk factors in acute care facilities and how to minimize or eliminate them. Acute care facilities are defined as hospitals, stand-alone inpatient psychiatric centers, and diagnostic and treatment centers.

RIPPLE EFFECT OF VIOLENCE IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS (VIDEO TRANSCRIPT)

It’s not unusual for health care workers to be pinched, yelled at, spit on, sexually harassed, and even threatened with weapons, by patients and their families and the impact of these events extends well beyond the workplace.

Karen McVeigh, a Resident Care Attendant, relates the following: “We had a female resident, she was a bit aggressive, and we’re doing care on her, and another care aid came in. I think that set her off. I was standing somewhere when her mouth, turned, and she bit my breast.”

According to Sheile Mercado-Mallari, RPN, Workplace Health, Fraser Health, “I went in to assist one patient, and he was an elderly patient with Alzheimer’s, and he grabbed my arm. You know, I was a very new nurse, and I really wasn’t sure of the protocols or policies, nor had I even heard, throughout my training that any kind of aggression was even possible.”

Darlene Simper, a Community Health Worker, tells the following story: “I went to a brand new client. He basically was talking to us and said he couldn’t take it anymore, and he was going to go get his gun.”

These incidents are obviously disturbing for the health care workers, but they can also have a lasting impact on their families, their co-workers, and the health care system as a whole.

Karen McVeigh also says: “It tires you out, so your sick time will get higher. And then it makes you afraid to be with certain residents. That fear factor is there, so you don’t want to be alone. So you might not give that person the care that he needs properly.”

According to Jan Fisher of Vancouver Coastal Health, “People have to remember that the workers are the same as anybody else, that they’re doing this because they love the work, and they want to help. But, if they’re injured, it affects their ability to provide care down the road. They have families that are relying on their ability to provide care and their ability to be a wife and a parent as well. When you have a serious injury that really has a serious ripple impact all the way along,
so we really want to keep our workers safe. (Courtesy of WorkSafeBC from the video series *Forever Changed*)

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify patient risk factors
- Identify ways to minimize or eliminate patient risk factors
- Identify ways that worker interactions can add stress to patients
- Identify ways to minimize or eliminate patient stress
- Identify environmental risk factors
- Identify ways to minimize or eliminate environmental risk factors

In order to complete this course, you need the following materials:

- This participant guide
- Optional: a computer with internet access to look up additional resources (e.g., glossary, references)
Introduction
The presence of patient risk factors can increase the likelihood that violence will occur.

What are patient risk factors for violence?
Patient risk factors are patient characteristics and/or conditions that may increase the potential for a violent incident.

As a healthcare worker, you cannot control a patient's risk factors. You can, however, choose responses that may minimize additional stress to the patient.

Why is it important to recognize patient risk factors?
Identifying patient risk factors helps you to plan ahead to minimize the risk of potentially violent situations.
**WHAT PATIENT RISK FACTORS SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?**

Some patient risk factors are common and, once identified, can be communicated among workers. These may include:

- A history of violence
- Medical conditions that may change someone's behaviour (e.g., dementia, delirium, or acute psychosis)
- Medications and/or substance use (e.g., drugs or alcohol)
- Post-anaesthetic reactions
- A history of abuse
MINIMIZING PATIENT RISK FACTORS FOR VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

There are several ways that patient risks can be minimized or, sometimes, even eliminated.

HOW DOES A PATIENT RISK ASSESSMENT HELP PROTECT ME?

A patient assessment is a general process used for evaluating their condition. Part of the assessment involves determining the patient’s potential risk for violence.

A patient's care plan is then created based on the assessment's outcome. Following a care plan that meets the patient's needs will often limit or reduce the amount of stressors the patient experiences. This may reduce or eliminate the patient’s risk for violence.

A care plan also lets you know about potential risks. Based on this knowledge, you can follow the safest work practice that also meets the patient's needs.
WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE PATIENT RISKS?

Using the following strategies can reduce or eliminate patient risk for violence:

- Regularly completing or refreshing violence prevention training
- Learning and using the Violence Alert system in your workplace
- Documenting and reporting changing behaviours
WHAT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS CAN I TAKE WHEN CARING FOR PATIENTS?

Taking the following safety precautions when caring for patients may help keep you safe:

- If you see a violence alert or are unfamiliar with a patient, check their chart and care plan, or ask clinical staff for information in order to be able to carry out work safely.
- Remove jewellery or equipment that may be grabbed or pulled (e.g., chains, earrings, stethoscope, lanyards)
- Trust your intuition and take all threats seriously
- Know when and how to call for help
- Work in pairs if needed
- Know your exits and don’t let the patient get between you and the exit
- Do not attempt to disarm a person or isolate yourself with a potentially violent person
- Remove yourself from the situation if you feel threatened
HOW CAN EMPLOYERS OR SUPERVISORS HELP PROTECT WORKERS AGAINST PATIENT RISK FACTORS?

Your employer has a legal obligation to make your work environment safe for you. By working together with your employer, you can help make the changes that best meet this need. The goal is to minimize or eliminate the risk.

Some questions that you and your employer can discuss are:

- Can this risk be eliminated? (e.g., making alternative arrangements for care, asking a visitor to leave)
- If not, can you reduce the risk by:
  - Using a different work process? (e.g., changing the care routine to get rid of the stressor such as bathing in the evening instead of early in the morning)
  - Making administrative changes? (e.g., scheduling workers to work in pairs)
  - Providing personal protective equipment? (e.g., personal alarms)

HOW TRAINING CAN HELP REDUCE PATIENT RISK FACTORS (VIDEO TRANSCRIPT)

Every day in British Columbia, health care workers are exposed to violence and aggression in the workplace. And that means that in addition to learning the technical and the medical skills they need, more and more health care workers are learning how to protect themselves against the very people they want to help.

According to Hugh Pelmore, who has been conducting training seminars in workplace safety and violence prevention for fifteen years, “Anybody who’s been into an emergency room recognizes this is a place where emotions are running high, there’s anxiety, family members aren’t well, there maybe some delays, and so on. So the potential for violence is quite great in those work areas. And we want workers to understand that they do have choices in how they respond to the conflict and potential violence in those environments.

Scenario 1:

Patient (Hugh Pelmore): I’ve been waiting for my son to get in here for some time!
Worker [calm voice]: Yeah, everybody’s in the same position. We’re really busy right now. If you’ll just take a seat, someone is going to get to you shortly.
Patient [angry voice]: Yeah, I need to get my son in here now.
Worker [calm voice]: Sir, you need to relax...
Patient [yelling]: Don’t tell me to freakin’ relax.

Defusing hostility is not a complicated process. It’s a straightforward everyday communication, making safe choices trusting intuition, knowing our limitations, and knowing that you don’t have to resolve everything.

**Scenario 2:**

Patient (Hugh Pelmore) [angry and yelling]: My son needs to be in here right now!

Worker [calm voice]: Yeah, I can understand sir, it’s very frustrating. We are pretty busy, but we’re going to get to you as soon as possible.

Patient: This is ridiculous.

Worker [calm voice]: I can understand how frustrating this can be. If you give me a moment, I’ll get an update for you, and I’ll find out just exactly how long it’s going to be.

There’s a completely different outcome in this scenario, so human connection is occurring, options, progress. She said “I’ll be right back, I’m gonna find out” and completing the whole thing with “I will get back to you,” and “if you don’t mind taking a seat.” She didn’t say “Take a seat,” she said “if you wouldn’t mind,” giving him some power, and it may not always be perfect, but it’s far less likely in that second scenario that he’s going to escalate to verbal threats or violence.”

Courtesy of WorkSafeBC from the video series *Forever Changed*
Select all statements that are TRUE. Once you’ve completed the quiz, you can go to the end of this guide to check your answers.

1. Patient risk factors are patient characteristics that, if present, along with other stressors, always result in a violent incident.
2. Communicating about patient risk factors can reduce or eliminate patient risk for violence.
3. Documenting and reporting disruptive behaviours allows the patient’s care plan to be modified.
4. Removing jewellery or equipment that can be grabbed or pulled is an example of a personal safety precaution.
5. You must try to disarm a potentially violent person.
**Patient Stressors – Worker Interaction**

**Introduction**

Many factors affect how your respond or react to a patient and their family. The way you interact with a patient can increase or decrease their distress.

**What personal characteristics and stresses do I bring to the workplace?**

There are many things that influence how you act and respond to others, including your:

- Personal beliefs
- Values
- Attitude
- Personal and/or work stress
- Emotional and/or physical health
- Confidence about how to respond to violent situations

**Why is it important to recognize personal characteristics and stresses I bring to the workplace?**

Self awareness and reflection can help you recognize how your interaction with patients may reduce or eliminate:

- Additional stress that the patient feels
- The potential for violent responses
**Introduction**

There are several ways that you can improve your interactions with patients.

**How can I be more effective in my interactions with patients?**

Your personal perceptions, values, beliefs and attitudes can affect how you interact with patients and how patients respond. To minimize their impact you need to:

- Assess and manage your own stress levels
- Problem solve (i.e., look for the underlying issue)
- Maintain respect
- Keep a sense of humour appropriate to the situation
WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE WHEN APPROACHING A PATIENT?

The following ways of approaching a patient may reduce a patient's stress and the likelihood of a violent response:

- Introduce yourself to the patient while approaching gently
- Listen to the patient and explain what you are doing
- Use a respectful tone
- Be non-judgmental
- Approach from a 45 degree angle (i.e., so that you're in the patient's line of sight, but also able to move quickly if needed)
- Protect and maintain a patient's privacy
- Be care-focused (not task-focused)
- Talk directly to the patient, not over them
**Violence Prevention**

**What resources can I use to protect myself against stress and burn-out?**

Being aware of your personal stress factors and managing them effectively can help you to better respond to patients. This may reduce the likelihood of a violent response.

Doing the following can help you to protect yourself against stress:

- Using self-care strategies in your personal life
- Fostering respectful and supportive work relationships
- Knowing when to seek help
- Accessing available support for workplace issues (e.g., EFAP, respectful workplace processes, your union)
- Learning new skills in communication and conflict resolution (e.g., employer and/or community resources)
Select all statements that are true. Once you’ve completed the quiz, you can go to the end of this guide to check your answers.

1. Recognizing your personal stress levels will not change how you interact with, and respond to, patients.

2. Your personal perceptions, values, beliefs and attitudes can affect how you interact with patients and how they respond.

3. Approaching a patient suddenly, without introducing yourself or explaining what you are doing, may result in a violent response.

4. Self awareness and reflection can help you choose ways of interacting with patients that reduce or eliminate additional stress that the patient feels.

5. Accessing available support for workplace issues can help protect you against stress and burn-out.
**Introduction**

Some risk factors for violence are environmental.

**What are environmental risk factors?**

Environmental risk factors are workplace environment conditions or job conditions that can affect worker safety. They may include:

- Poor physical design (e.g., access to exits)
- Poor lighting
- Poor visibility
- Working alone or in isolation (e.g., working too far away to call for help)

**Why is it important to know about environmental risk factors?**

Identifying environmental risk factors allows you to:

- Plan strategies that can keep you safe in potentially violent situations (e.g., working in pairs where possible)
- Respond effectively during a violent incident (e.g., using an exit in a timely manner)
WHAT ARE ACUTE CARE ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS?

Acute care has some areas (i.e., Emergency and Psychiatric services) where the following physical design factors create a greater risk for violence:

- Workstation designs that leave staff vulnerable to assault (e.g., a lack of barriers between staff and patients)
- Poor sight lines inside or outside the health care facility (e.g., not having full view of a waiting area, corridor, or outside pathway)
- Lack of adequate security devices (e.g., lack of cameras or keypads/card access that prohibits public access to patient or work areas)
- Lack of alternate exits
**MINIMIZING OR ELIMINATING ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS**

**INTRODUCTION**

There are several ways that environmental risks can be minimized or, sometimes, even eliminated.

**WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL RISK AT WORK?**

Personal protective actions are precautions that you take to stay safe while you are working. They keep you visible, help you avoid potentially dangerous situations, and allow you to get help if you need it. These include:

- **Reporting:**
  - Any workplace design concerns
  - Working alone concerns

- Letting your supervisor or manager and/or the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee know about any concerns and work with them to come up with solutions

- Following safe work procedures or working-alone procedures

- Following procedures for refusing any work that you believe to be unsafe

*Remember, in any situation where you feel unsafe you:*
  - Have a right to refuse unsafe work
  - Should trust your gut instinct*
What actions can I take to protect myself against outside environmental risk?

Personal protective actions you can take to stay safe outside of work include:

- Parking in a well-lit area, preferably near the parking attendant
- Using main entrances and exits
- Traveling with a buddy, using security escorts, or having a co-worker watch from a window
- Carrying your keys in your hand for protection and quick access to your vehicle
- Immediately locking your car doors
- Avoiding bushed areas and shortcuts through deserted areas
- Being aware of people and making eye contact without staring

How can physical design modifications protect me?

Design modifications refer to physical design changes that increase visibility, improve communication, and minimize the risk of assault. For example:

- Arranging and/or securing furniture and other objects to minimize their use as weapons
- Installing emergency signaling, alarms and monitoring systems
- Installing protective barriers at nursing stations
- Installing keypad controlled access to control exits and entrances
- Installing enough lighting in the right locations

If you have concerns about physical design in your workplace, follow your organization’s reporting procedures.
HOW CAN ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES PROTECT ME?

Administrative changes refer to work procedures and policies that are put into practice to minimize or eliminate the risk of violence. These changes may include:

- Scheduling workers to work in pairs (i.e., eliminating working alone situations)
- Creating safe work procedures (e.g., using check-in systems)
- Posting signs that list special precautions that workers must take
- Making security and emergency response teams available
Select all statements that are true. Once you’ve completed the quiz, you can go to the end of this guide to check your answers.

1. Environmental risk factors are job conditions or workplace environment conditions that can affect worker safety.
2. Identifying environmental risk factors does not allow you to plan using strategies that can keep you safe in potentially dangerous situations.
3. Working alone, in isolation, or too far away to call for help is an environmental risk factor.
4. Physical design changes can reduce the risk of violence, especially in high risk areas.
**Test Your Knowledge # 4**

Match the correct phrase to each statement. Once you’ve completed the quiz, you can go to the end of this guide to check your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative changes</th>
<th>Physical design changes that increase visibility, improve communication, and minimize the risk of assault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal protective actions</td>
<td>Work procedures and policies that can minimize or eliminate the risk of workplace violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design modifications</td>
<td>Precautions that you take to stay safe while you are working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design modifications</td>
<td>Using main entrances and exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal protective actions</td>
<td>Arranging/securing furniture and other objects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this module, you have learned the following key points:

- Patient risk factors are patient characteristics that increase the likelihood that violence may occur. By identifying patient risk factors ahead of time, you can plan to reduce the likelihood of violence by choosing responses that may minimize additional stress to the patient.

- Patient risk factors cannot be controlled, but they may be minimized or eliminated by: 1) completing or refreshing Violence Prevention training, 2) conducting a patient risk assessment, 3) learning and using the Violence Alert system in your workplace, and 4) documenting and reporting disruptive behaviours.

- Being aware of your personal stress levels and managing them effectively can help you to respond effectively to patients.

- Environmental risk factors are job conditions or workplace environmental conditions that can affect worker safety. Identifying environmental risk factors allows you to: 1) plan strategies that can keep you safe in potentially dangerous situations, and 2) respond effectively during a violent incident.

- Environmental risks can be minimized or, sometimes, even eliminated: 1) by making physical design modifications, 2) through administrative changes, and 3) by using personal protective actions.
Module 3 (Acute) Quiz

Please complete the following quiz once you have finished this module. Circle the correct answer(s) for each question.

1) Identifying patient risk factors and planning ahead does **not** help to minimize the risk of potentially violent situations:
   - True
   - False

2) Which of the following are patient risk factors for violence that should be communicated among workers?
   - A. History of violence
   - B. Medical condition (e.g., dementia)
   - C. Post-anaesthetic reactions
   - D. History of abuse
   - E. All of the above

3) A patient risk assessment is a general process used for evaluating the patient’s condition. Part of the patient assessment involves determining the patient’s potential risk for violence. A patient’s ________________ is then created based on the assessment’s outcome.
   - A. bathing schedule
   - B. care plan
   - C. evaluation

4) Which of the following strategies help workers minimize patient risk factors?
   - A. Documenting contact information for patient’s family members
   - B. Conducting a patient risk assessment
   - C. Creating a care plan to meet the patient’s needs
   - D. Documenting and reporting disruptive behaviours so the patient’s care plan can be modified.
   - E. All of the above

5) Changing the care routine to reduce a patient’s stress (e.g., bathing in the evening instead of the morning) is **not** an effective strategy to reduce the risk of violence.
   - True
   - False
6) Your personal characteristics and stresses (e.g., emotional and/or physical health, level of confidence about how to respond to violent situations) can influence how you act and respond to patients.
   - True
   - False

7) Self awareness and reflection can help you recognize how your interactions with patients may reduce or eliminate:
   A. The patient’s pain threshold
   B. Additional stress the patient feels
   C. Potential for violent responses
   D. The patient’s medication needs

8) Your physical approach to a patient should be from the side, at a 45 degree angle, so that you are in the patient’s line of sight but also able to move away quickly if needed.
   - True
   - False

9) Which of the following strategies of approaching a patient may reduce a patient’s stress and the likelihood of a violent response?
   A. Use a respectful tone
   B. If you are caring for an underage patient, it is okay to address all your comments to the family member instead of the patient
   C. Make the patient as comfortable as possible
   D. Address the patient directly by name.
   E. All of the above

10) Accessing available support for workplace issues (e.g. EFAP, respectful workplace processes, or your union) can help protect you against stress and burn-out.
    - True
    - False

11) Environmental risk factors are workplace environment conditions or job conditions which can negatively affect worker safety. Which of the following are examples of environmental risk factors?
    A. Poor access to exits
    B. Security cameras
    C. Working alone or in isolation
    D. Controlled access to entrances
    E. All of the above
12) If you have concerns about workplace design or working alone, your only option is to report them to your supervisor.
   - True
   - False

13) In any situation where you feel unsafe you have a right to refuse unsafe work and should trust your gut instinct.
   - True
   - False

14) Which of the following are examples of workplace physical design changes that can protect you against violence?
   A. Working in pairs
   B. Arranging and/or securing furniture and other objects to minimize their use as weapons
   C. Using safe work procedures
   D. Installing adequate lighting to increase visibility
   E. All of the above

15) The only way to minimize or eliminate environmental risks is by making physical design modifications.
   - True
   - False
Test Your Knowledge – Answer Keys

Test Your Knowledge #1
1. False - Patient risk factors are patient characteristics and conditions that, if present, along with other stressors, may have a higher likelihood of resulting in a violent incident.
2. True - Communicating about patient risk factors can reduce/eliminate patient risk for violence.
3. True - Documenting & reporting disruptive behaviours allows the patient’s care plan to be modified.
4. True - Removing jewellery or equipment that can be grabbed or pulled is an example of a personal safety precaution.
5. False - You must never try to disarm a potentially violent person.

Test Your Knowledge #2
1. False - Recognizing your personal stress levels can change how you interact with, and respond to patients.
2. True - Your personal perceptions, values, beliefs & attitudes may result in a patient’s violent response.
3. True - Approaching a patient suddenly, without introducing yourself or explaining what you are doing, may result in a violent response.
4. True - Self awareness and reflection can help you choose ways of interacting with patients that reduce or eliminate additional stress that the patient feels.
5. True - Accessing available support for workplace issues can help protect you against workplace stress and burnout.

Test Your Knowledge #3
1. True - Environmental risk factors are job or workplace environment conditions that can affect worker safety.
2. False - Identifying environmental risk factors DOES allow you to plan for using strategies that can keep you safe in potentially dangerous situations.
3. True - Working alone, in isolation, or too far away to call for help is an environmental risk factor.
4. True - Physical design changes can reduce the risk of violence, especially in high risk areas.
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE # 4

1. Design modifications - physical design changes that increase visibility, improve communication, and minimize the risk of assault.

2. Administrative changes - work procedures and policies that can minimize or eliminate the risk of workplace violence.

3. Personal protective actions - precautions that you take to stay safe while you are working.

4. Personal protective actions – using main entrances and exits.

5. Design modifications – arranging/securing furniture and other objects.
MODULE 3 (ACUTE) QUIZ ANSWER KEY

1) False
2) E
3) B
4) B, C, D
5) False
6) True
7) B, C
8) True
9) A, C, D
10) True
11) A, C
12) False
13) True
14) B, D
15) False
NOTES