

# Where nurses are bullied, the quality of patient care declines

In workplaces where nurses are bullied, the quality of patient care declines, the health of nurses suffers, and the retention of quality nurses becomes difficult.

A new article published in the *Journal of Obstetric, Gynaecologic, & Neonatal Nursing* reviews the psychological and social issues related to bullying in the workplace and strategies for creating a respectful work environment.

More than half of nurses surveyed by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations reported that they had been abused at work, and over 90% said they had witnessed abusive behaviour. Physicians instigate most verbal abuse to nurses, yet abuse from fellow nurses is the second most common type.

Many nurses develop serious health problems and may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, or insomnia. Other abusers may direct their anger toward co-workers or patients. Up to 75% of healthcare workers believe disruptive behaviour reduces patient satisfaction and care.

Author Dianne Felblinger, nursing Associate Professor at the University of Cincinnati, explains how bullying causes severe emotional distress that hinders nurses' ability to do their job. Some are so traumatized they abandon their careers. "We've lost bright, dedicated neonatal and women's health nurses," Felblinger says.

To ensure a positive work environment, Felblinger encourages employees to report bullying to senior leaders and take immediate action against perpetrators. She recommends the zero-tolerance standards of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses. Felblinger says, "Administrators who want to promote a healthy, respectful place to work must establish boundaries."

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