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Keeping Staff Safe: The Threat Assessment and Management Committee

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Although workplace violence has been pervasive in the healthcare industry for over 20 years, it was usually brushed off by nurses as “part of the job.” With injuries related to violence on the rise, UC San Diego Health decided to take a more proactive approach to improve workplace safety. In 2015, it established the Threat Assessment and Management Committee (TAMC), which is an inter-departmental committee made up of leaders from Security, Safety, Nursing, Emergency Management, University Police and two standing executive members, the Chief Clinical Officer and Chief Administrative Officer over the Facilities Support Division. The purpose of the committee is to recognize and prevent violence in the workplace. The TAMC includes a sub-committee made up of direct care nurses and staff, who review policies and make recommendations on workplace violence mitigation strategies from their perspective as direct care providers.

In a dynamic environment like a medical center, it can be extremely difficult to create a one-size fit all violence mitigation approach due to a variety of issues; such as acuity level, underlying psychiatric concerns, and drug use. Patients are often transferred from one department to another and the continuity of information regarding a patient’s violent behavior is often left out in the long list of information shared from one nurse to another during shift change.

During several root causes analyses, it was determined that there were multiple cases where a single patient assaulted multiple staff members from different departments due to the lack of consistent information transfer. UCSDH, in collaboration with EPIC, developed the first of its kind, Staff Safety Alert. When applied to a patient’s chart, the alert pops-up when a staff member logs into their chart. This alert will include the following information: Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation (SBAR). The alert must be acknowledged by the staff member in order to access the patient’s chart. This ensures the continuity of information regarding a patient’s propensity for violence and strategies for nursing staff keep themselves safe.

The Staff Safety Alert is one of the many strategies that UCSDH has implemented to minimize or mitigate workplace violence. Other strategies include signage and policies affirming that violence towards staff will not be tolerated, option for staff to have security present at the bedside when interacting with patients with a history of violence, two dedicated security personnel in the Emergency Department 24/7, the hiring of a dedicated Workplace Violence Prevention Program Manager (WVPP Manager) and many more not listed here. The WVPP Manager position is tasked with the ongoing evaluation of the violent incidents to determine necessary follow up strategies, which



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has been with UC San Diego Health for over 13 years serving as the Director of Security Services and Parking Transportation. She is also the Facilities Services Administrative Officer over the UCSDH Services Division, which includes the Food and Nutrition Department, Environmental Services, Emergency Management, Telecom and Safety Department. She holds a Bachelors in Business Management and Masters in Advanced Studies in Leadership in Healthcare Organization. She is also a Certified Protection Professional (CPP) through ASIS International. With over 25 years in Healthcare Security, she has implemented multiple initiatives geared towards reducing workplace violence. Elizabeth developed the UCSDH Threat Assessment and Management Committee, which includes leaders from multiple departments. When she isn’t working, she enjoys working on multiple home projects and going on vacation with her two kids and husband.

includes the review of a patient’s chart for historical information to determine whether a safety plan needs to be developed to ensure nurses and faculty safety during patient care. This evaluation, which is conducted in consultation with Risk Management, may include the recommendation for dismissal based on the egregious nature of a single incident or frequency of incidents that may/could have caused harm to the other patients, nurses and staff. The implementation of weapons screening for all patients/visitors entering the Emergency Department delayed due to COVID but expect to go live by the middle of the year (2021). All of these strategies are evaluated and endorsed by the Threat Assessment and Management Committee.

New Knowledge, Innovations & Improvements

UCSD nurses integrate evidence into clinical practice. There are programs and resources in place that enable nurses to explore safest and best practices for their patients and practice environment. UCSD nurses contribute to the body of nursing knowledge and shape nursing practice through research and dissemination of knowledge.