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Second International Conference on Violence in the Health Sector – From Awareness to Sustainable Action

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CONFERENCE REVIEW

Second International Conference on Violence in the Health Sector – From Awareness to Sustainable Action

De Meer Vaat, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 27-29 October 2010

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This was the second international conference on violence in the health sector, which was held over three days with workshops run alongside the concurrent sessions. The first day consisted of the welcome addresses, five keynote presentations, and the remainder of the day consisted of concurrent sessions and parallel workshops. Day two consisted of all concurrent sessions with some parallel workshops, and day three commenced with concurrent sessions, finishing up with two more keynote presentations, and a conference summary session.

Day one of the conference started with the welcome address from four groups of speakers. The first two speakers were Dr Ian Needham and Mr Kevin McKenna, chairs of the organising and scientific committee, who formally welcomed the participants and encouraged participant networking. The second speaker was Ms Ellie van Soelen from the Dutch NNA Nu'91, who highlighted a need for action on workplace violence across the board. Third was Ms Anja Jonkers, from the Netherlands, Inspectorate for Nursing & Chronic Care, who highlighted an increasing incidence of workplace violence for nurses in the Netherlands and that a strategy was required by government and hospital management to decrease the violence. The final speaker was Mr Nico Oud, the conference organiser, who highlighted the countries where participants and presenters were from, and the support provided to attract presenters to the conference from third world countries.

The first five keynote presentations covered a variety of topics and included presenters from around the globe. They were: Dr Donna Manca, a family physician from Alberta, Canada; Professor Guy Widdershoven, professor of philosophy and ethics of medicine and head of the department of medical humanities, and senior researcher at the EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research of VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam; Associate Professor Jon Adams, Head of the Discipline of Social Science in the School of Population Health at the University of Queensland; Ms Paula Lampe, an author from Assen, The Netherlands; and, Ms Evelyn Bain, recently retired Associate Director/Coordinator of Health & Safety at the Massachusetts Nurses Association.

The first keynote presentation, **Stalking as Violent Behaviour** by Dr Donna Manca, was a two-part presentation. The first part of the presentation was about her personal experience with a patient who stalked her, including leaving threatening voice messages on her mobile and home phone message systems. Finally, she outlined how she dealt with this issue and how it affected her and her family. The second part of the presentation was about a study that was conducted across Canada with family physicians and their exposure to workplace

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violence. The study found that approximately 90% of family physicians were exposed to some form of workplace violence, and of note was the number of the study respondents, 14%, who stated they had also been stalked, like Dr Manca.

The second keynote presentation, **Ethical Considerations on Violence in Health Care** was by Professor Guy Widdershoven. Professor Widdershoven discussed the issues of rules and relationships, rules being black and white, but open to some interpretation, and used for people to work within. Relationships, or moral relationships, are an agreement between the different parties and how each other react to specific situations. Professor Widdershoven provided a case discussion where he highlighted the issues and differences of rules and relationships between health care workers and their patients/clients.

The third keynote presentation, **Workplace Violence – From Taboo to Agenda – Some Sociological Considerations** by Associate Professor Jon Adams, who as a sociologist, talked about a social science approach to examining workplace violence and the use of qualitative studies, or studies using a mixed methods approach. He emphasised the use of qualitative approaches to gain a more in-depth understanding about the effects of workplace violence that quantitative methods could not obtain.

The fourth keynote presentation, **A Crime beyond Belief: Serial Murder in Health Care Institutions** by Paula Lampe. Paula highlighted the issue of workplace violence by healthcare providers against their patients/clients, and mentioned her book *Angels of Death*, in which she writes about murders committed by healthcare providers around the world. Paula also highlighted a couple of well noted cases, Dr Harold Shipman, a general practitioner from the UK, and Colin Norris, a nurse from the UK, and their reasons for murdering their patients. Paula's main emphasis was to also look at the health care provider when there are a number of deaths that may have been expected but seem odd in the way they occurred.

The fifth and final keynote presentation for day one was **Protecting from Workplace Violence – Tools from the Massachusetts Nurses Association** by Evelyn Bain. Evelyn presented briefly on the results of a survey on workplace violence that the Massachusetts Nurses Association conducted, and then on how the Massachusetts Nurses Association had made significant gains in the protection of nurses in the health care sector. The gains included a position statement on how to protect nurses in the workplace, a model contract language on violence prevention, suggested training activities, support for injured nurses, and changes to legislation to protect nurses.

Day two consisted of more concurrent sessions and workshops. In the morning session the concurrent session themes included of *Violence against Staff, Strategies to Manage Violence, Various Themes, and Intimate Partner Violence*. After the morning break the themes were *Strategies to Manage Violence; Violence against Staff; Impact of Violence; Stigma, Blame and Attribution Issues, and Intimate Partner Violence*. After the lunch break the themes were *Strategies to Manage Violence; Violence against Staff, and Staff to Staff Violence*. Following the afternoon break the themes were *Staff to staff Violence; Strategies to Manage Violence; Impact of Violence; and Methodological Issues*. The workshops ran all day and in the pre-morning break session there were two workshops, *Opening a Dialogue on Nursing Student Abuse: Disrupting the Cycle of Violence in Nursing Education* by Pat Bradley and Alix McGregor, and *Identification of Abuse in Elderly Persons: Prevalence, Risk Factors and Tools for Identification* by Miri Cohen. The pre-lunch workshop was *Walking with Moreno - how concepts and techniques from psychodrama and role training can help us be creative in managing aggression in the workplace* by Wendy McIntosh. In the post-lunch session there were two workshops, *Explaining, Reflecting and Managing Aggression and Violence in*
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Health Care using the NOW-Model by Johannes Nau, Nico Oud and Gernot Walter and *Essential Infrastructure and Positive Outcomes of an Innovative Approach to Violent Incident Team Response in Acute Care Settings* by Leslie Gamble, Shelley Smillie, Shannon Campbell and Clayton Towpich. Following the afternoon break there was one workshop, *Bridging the Gap-Dealing with both Domestic Violence and Violence in the Health Sector* by Marion Steffens and Ulrike Janz.

The conference dinner was held on the evening of day two, aboard the *Prins van Orange*, an old time river boat which dates from the beginning of last century. The boat toured the main waterways around Amsterdam whilst the conference participants mingled on the lower deck and dined in an old world atmosphere on the upper deck, with a modern band playing on the lower deck.

Day three started again with concurrent sessions with themes of *Impact of Violence, Staff to Staff Violence, Strategies to Manage Violence*, and *Violence Against Staff and Impact of Violence*. After the morning break the themes were *Awareness Promotion, Strategies to Manage Violence*, and *Staff to Staff Violence*. The four concurrent workshops covered *Health Care Serial Killers* by Paula Lampe from The Netherlands, *Using Good Old Leary in Prevention of Patient Conflicts* by Feno Moes from The Netherlands, which were conducted in the pre-morning break session. In the mid-morning to lunch session workshops included; *"The Writing was on the Wall" – Coping with Violence against the Staff* by Shoshana Shalom-Azar and Anett Liben from Israel, *Coping with Physical Agression: Introduction to Defensive, and Self-Protection Methods as a Response to Violence* by Yves Schwarmes and Jean-Marc Cloos from Luxembourg, and *Self Harm-Violence on the Body, Impact on Staff* by Wendy McIntosh from Australia.

There were two final keynote presentations. The first was *Developing a National Strategic Approach* by Kevin McKenna. Mr McKenna spoke about the ***Linking Service and Safety: Together Creating Safer Places of Service – Strategy for Managing Work-related Aggression and Violence within the Irish Health Service***, a report that was released in December 2008. This report outlines a strategic approach to managing workplace-related violence utilising four best practice approaches; *a contextual understanding of aggression and violence within healthcare, an integrated balanced organisational response, a public health preventative approach, and a partnership ethos of working*.

The final keynote presentation was *Violence, why? and how to Control It* by Albert van der Zeijden, Past President of the International Alliance of Patients' Organisations (IAPO). Mr van der Zeijden spoke about how the individual patient organisations, such as the diabetic support groups, combined together to form a large alliance to lobby governments and other health related organisations for a violence free work place for health care providers and for safe health care settings for patients.

There were 35 posters on display from day one, which covered a diverse range of workplace violence topics. The posters were judged by the scientific committee and conference participants who completed a form where they selected the poster they considered the best.

The conference was summarised by Dr Mireille Kingma who overviewed the findings from the presentations, primarily by discipline groups. Dr Kingma also highlighted some issues identified during the conference that needed to be resolved as research continues on healthcare provider's exposure to workplace violence; for example, lateral and horizontal violence also comes under the more accurate term of intimidation by a fellow worker, as does workplace bullying. These terminology differences appeared to be country based.

The conference was closed by Dr Ian Needham and Mr Kevin McKenna who announced the winners of best paper and poster prizes at the conference. The best paper prize was awarded to Matthew London, Jane Lipscomb and Kate McPhale, from the USA, for their paper titled *Intervening to Prevent Co-worker Violence in U.S. Mental Health Facilities*, while the best poster prize was awarded to Eric Stoppels and Carla de Bruyn, from The Netherlands, for their poster titled *Training Staff in Aggression Management at Dimence (Mental Health Care Institute) from Risk Awareness to Useful Tools in Aggression Management*.

The concurrent sessions all had a similar theme, violence against health care providers in the course of providing care for patients/clients during, and after, their working day. The most concerning points were; the high incidence rates of violent acts against health care providers, the lack of action by health care organisations to support their workers, and lack of policy and legislation by governments to protect healthcare providers. This was the first time that violence against paramedics has been presented at one of the *Violence in the Health Sector* conferences, with one paper from Australia, one from Ireland, and one from Austria. Presenters of the paramedic papers all highlighted the incidence of violence to be the highest of all healthcare providers in their respective countries. The presenters of the paramedic papers also highlighted a lack of action from the employing organisations in supporting their healthcare workers following the violent acts against them.

Another issue identified by the presenters was in the acts of violence against students during training at their educational institution, or while on clinical placements, and the impact that this may have on students successfully completing their studies and subsequent longevity in their chosen profession/discipline. To date, no researchers have investigated, or published, on this issue in Australian universities or other educational institutions.

The third International Conference on Violence in the Health Sector will be held in Vancouver, Canada on the 24th to 26th October 2012, with the location to be announced at a later date.