

Slide 1

Work Place Issues

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Slide 2

Workplace Issues How Safe Are You?

- Determine your risk of encountering a workplace issue that can affect your health or well-being.
- Understand ergonomics and ways to safeguard your musculoskeletal system.
- Strategize ways to recognize errors and minimize further harm or injury.
- Know the risk of exposure to hazardous substances.

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2

There are many hazards that exist in the health care arena. A few of these hazards include risk for injury, toxic chemicals, bioterrorism, and violence. It is your job as a health care professional to be aware of potential hazards and know what needs to be done to minimize and/or avoid injury, occupational exposure, and illness.

Slide 3

- Understand the risk for violence at work and how to reduce your risk.
- Analyze workplace bullying and harassment.
- Create a personal plan to deal with workplace problems such as staffing shortages and being assigned (floating) to an unfamiliar workplace.
- Identify useful Internet sites to remain up-to-date with potential workplace issues (e.g., OSHA, CDC, ANA).

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3

How well an organization plans and implements policies is great way to analyze how safe you can expect to be while working for an organization.

There are several workplace issues that can affect your health and well-being.

Think about how you will handle any workplace issues that may arise while you are working as nurse and come up with a plan.

Slide 4

Questions to Ask When Starting a New Position

- Latex-free facility?
- Ergonomic devices available?
- Any lifting, pulling, using computers?
- Antiviolence program?
- Needleless facility?
- Exposure policy?
- Workmen's compensation program?
 - When can I return to work? Restrictions?
- Bioterrorism plans?
- TB, influenza prevention plans?

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4

Listed here are questions to either ask or consider when starting a new position so you can make a good sound decision on the impact that workplace issues will have on your health and well-being.

Slide 5

- Adherence to OSHA regulations and CDC guidelines?
- Who is the Safety Officer?
- Emergency response plan?
- Is the parking lot safe?
- Vaccination programs?
- Surveillance plan for multidrug-resistant organisms?
- How does the organization handle staff shortages?
 - (floating, mandatory overtime, working off shifts)

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What vaccinations are requirements, especially with recent COVID mandates. How often are nurses expected to float to other units? Does the facility mandate overtime? Are nurses expected to pick up shifts other than normally worked shifts?

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Does your facility implement principles of ergonomics?

- A. Always
- B. Sometimes
- C. Never
- D. Not sure

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6

Slide 7

- Major safety concern.
- Nurses at risk for musculoskeletal injuries—most common type.
 - Back
- 90% of the nurses complain of back pain.

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Nurses often have at some time in their career problems with musculoskeletal injuries. It is very important to follow proper body mechanics when assisting a patient, to help prevent injury to yourself or the patient. A back injury can impact your ability to perform your duties as a nurse, which in turn can impact your career.

Slide 8

- Risks related to back injury
 - Repetitive tasks
 - Heavy lifting or moving done manually
 - Any lifting, transferring, repositioning, and reaching activities
 - Sudden position changes
 - Rooms not set up ergonomically
- Proper body mechanics do not result in fewer injuries—there is **no safe way to manually lift patients!**

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8

The duties that are expected in the nursing profession make nurses more susceptible to back injuries. These duties include lifting, transferring, repositioning, and reaching which are all actions associated with back injury. Proper body mechanics are not going to prevent all injuries, but will help avoid some.

Slide 9

- Reduce the risk of serious back injury.
 - Assess the patient's dependency needs and abilities.
 - Decide appropriate assistive devices needed, and use them correctly.
 - Keep yourself fit.
 - Join a yoga or Pilates program.
 - Stretch or perform warm-up exercises prior to start of shift.
 - Report any injury.

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9

The first assessment should include the safety to all involved when lifting, transferring, repositioning, or reaching to provide patient care. If assistive devices can be used, by all means use them. Make sure you know what devices are available and how to properly use them. Never attempt to perform any duties by yourself if unsafe to do so. Keeping yourself in good shape will help you prevent some injury. Stretching is beneficial, do before you start your day and again at the

end of the day.
If an injury occurs never ignore it,
remember to report it.

Slide 10

- Ergonomic workstations
 - In developing these workstations, consider the task, posture, and work activities.
 - Workstation components.
 - Chair, desk, placement of computer, keyboard, monitor
 - Chair: Ensure proper padding and lumbar support
 - Desk: Large enough for CPU and writing
 - Monitor, keyboard, and mouse
 - Monitor height should be 18 to 22 in above desk surface
 - Keyboard aligned to center of user's body
 - Mouse placed on side of dominant hand

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10

In our world of computer use, it is important to make sure the work station is ergonomically appropriate for all that may use it.

The important parts of the work station are a positional chair, the desk, the placement of the computer, keyboard, and monitor. The best case scenario is the monitor keyboard, and mouse being adjustable for every worker.

Slide 11

- Repetitive motion disorders (RMD)
 - Associated with users who work for long periods at poorly arranged and constructed workstations
 - Possible solutions to reduce risk of RMD
 - Use ergonomically designed computers, desks, chairs, and workstations.
 - Learn and use proper body alignment strategies.
 - Switch between sitting and standing positions often.
 - Perform stretching exercises that focus on the neck, shoulders, back, arms, and fingers.

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11

Having a good understanding of ergonomic principles can help prevent injury.

Providing information on changing body positions that can change or reduce stress on muscle groups is helpful in preventing repetitive motion disorders.

Slide 12

- Violence—intentional use of physical force with likelihood of causing injury or death.
 - Coworkers
 - Patients
 - Families
 - Visitors
- Studies report that at least 80% of nurses have experienced some type of workplace violence in their career.
- www.bullyinstitute.org

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Workplace violence is on the rise and is the second leading cause for occupational death in the United States.

Studies have shown that 80% of nurses have experienced some sort of workplace violence.

Workplace violence is defined as violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed at individuals at work or on duty.

Workplace violence can result in injury or even death.

Any incident of workplace violence should be reported.

12

Slide 13

What type of “code” would the nurse initiate if a person became combative in a hospital setting?

- A. Code blue
- B. Code pink
- C. Code green
- D. Code white
- E. Code yellow

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13

D. Code white (per the book)

At FRMC the code is now announced as security alert aggressive person.

Slide 14

- Crisis intervention programs
 - Recognize signs of escalating anger.
 - Strategies to de-escalate situation.
- Code white
 - Signals a potentially violent situation.
 - Used to summon trained personnel.
 - The goal is to de-escalate the situation.

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It is important to know the facility policy dealing with workplace violence.

Another important step would be to take a crisis intervention course to become familiar with the signs of escalating violence and learn how to de-escalate anger.

Familiar signs of escalating violence are:

- pacing
- using foul language
- raising one's fist
- using threats

34

Slide 15

Workplace Violence

- *Lateral violence* (bullying)—a systematic mistreatment of an individual by a perpetrator (can be verbal, behavioral, or sabotage).
- Not a single event—occurs over time.
- Can occur in any workplace setting.
- The target may experience psychological and physiological signs and symptoms.
 - Chest pain, anxiety, headaches, vomiting, abdominal pain

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Bullies of childhood tend to grow into bullies in adulthood.

We often hear “nurses eat their young,” new nurses in the field often have to prove themselves.

There is need of co-workers to know they can be counted on to care for their patients and be a part of the team.

As you progress in your new jobs you will gain confidence and you will be integrated into your position.

Lateral violence – is different, it is evident mistreatment well beyond the initial struggles of a new job. It is not a single event, it occurs over time causing physical and psychological consequences.

35

Slide 16

Workplace Violence

- If you are the target of lateral violence
 - First of all, **Name It**—this validates you as the target of lateral violence or bullying and that your experience is not your fault.
 - **Seek Respite**—“Bully proof” yourself.
 - **Expose the Bully**—address the situation with your employer, giving them a chance to address the issue.

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16

If you are the target of lateral violence or bullying you should take these three steps:

1. **Name it**- “I am being bullied”, “I have a bully at work” (this self-talk will assist you in validating your experience)
2. **Seek respite**- take time to accomplish five things:
 - check your mental health
 - check your physical health
 - research state and federal legal options
 - gather data the supports the economical impact the bully has had on your unit
 - start a job search so you have options as you address your current work situation
3. **Expose the bully**- most individuals who are being bullied are not willing to expose the bully in fear of retaliation.

Slide 17

- Latex allergies
- SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome)
- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)
- TB exposure
- Needlestick injuries

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17

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has established guidelines that organizations must follow to protect workers.

Every organization that uses sharps devices or needles must have a policy in place to treat and protect workers.

The Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act, became law on November 6, 2000, provides important protections for health care workers regarding needle stick injuries.

The ANA was instrumental in having the Blood-Borne Pathogen Standard passed. This standard requires use of safer devices to protect workers from sharp injuries

Slide 18

- Nurses have many options for employment and will look for the best offer, which may include these features.
- Higher salaries, benefits, sign-on bonuses, and tuition repayment—these “extras” are very attractive to new graduates.
- Nursing autonomy, low nurse-to-patient ratios, and collaborative relationships.
- A facility that has attained Magnet status.

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Staffing shortages are at an all time high at this time, prevalent in all areas of nursing and unfortunately will continue as nurses become scarcer and the need for nursing care increases.

A facility that provides an environment that is conducive to good nursing care is the best place to work.

The characteristics that attract nurses to a facility are higher salaries, benefits, sign on bonuses, tuition repayment.

Characteristics that retain nurses lean more towards autonomy, low nurse-patient ratios, and collaborative relationships with physicians. These characteristics fostered the Magnet status that hospitals actively seek.

Slide 19

- Know to whom you should report your concerns.
- Remain calm; use assessment skills.
 - Number of patients; what's going on with them; nursing tasks needed; priorities?
 - Available resources; anyone to delegate to; any family support?
 - Any colleagues available to help?
 - Another way to deliver care?
 - Policies for high census/patient loads?
- Document concerns.

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Reporting concerns should always follow the chain of command. (charge nurse, assistant director, manager or director of the unit, chief nursing officer)

Gather all the facts, present your case, just the facts, state your concerns, present a clear outline of the situation and possible solutions. Never use a threatening tone.

Slide 20

- Creates loss of control for nurses.
- Puts safe patient care at risk.
- Fatigue jeopardizes safety.
- Legislation opposed to mandatory overtime an ANA priority.

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20

Mandatory overtime is used in some facilities. The use of this technique does not foster retention and in the days of nursing shortage is a high-risk solution.

Mandatory times creates a loss of control for nurses regarding non-work functions and family time. Mandatory overtime is a major concern for the profession with nurse fatigue resulting which in turn can affect patient safety.

Slide 21

The state you are working in does not prohibit mandatory overtime. You have been notified by your nursing supervisor that several nurses called in sick for the night shift and that you will need to stay to help the staff on the night shift. What do you do?

- A. Tell the nursing supervisor that you cannot stay.
- B. Stay to help the night shift until they are caught up.
- C. Stay but tell the supervisor that you will need to leave by a certain time.
- D. Put in your resignation notice and leave after your shift.

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21

What would you do???

Slide 22

- Possible creative solutions to prevent it
 - On-call system
 - Policies limiting mandatory overtime and ensuring rotation
 - Giving incentives to encourage the part-time staff to pick extra shifts
 - Developing creative shifts for high activity
 - Identifying the shortages early
 - Rewarding the nurses for extra effort

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22

Mandatory overtime might be avoided if creative solutions are developed and implemented. Creating solutions can help develop a good work environment. FRMC has recently tried to alleviate mandatory overtime by offering a monetary incentive for nurses who sign up for extra hours with the use of contracts for a specific timeframe.

Slide 23

- Ethical issue is that if you are not on your assigned unit, there will be a disproportionately high number of patients to nurses, which increases errors, or there is the risk of having a less skilled nurse on a unit, which can also lead to problem.
- Studies have not demonstrated that the risk of a less skilled nurse has really contributed to patient harm; studies of nursing workload have indicated that the greater the workload, the greater the risk for harm to patients (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006).

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23

Floating onto another unit can be difficult, but remember the patient care is similar.

The problem can arise if the unit that you are floated to provides care that you are not trained to provide. This can present a patient safety issue. (example: a med-surg nurse who is requested to float to a specialty unit or ICU).

There are ethical issues involved with floating to another unit and these issues resolve around the skill level of the nurse that is being floated. An orientation should be given to nurses if they are expected to float to another unit.

Slide 24

- In the IOM report on errors in health care, 44,000 to 98,000 people die every year from errors (IOM, 2006).
- Report the medical error per facility policy.

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24

There are a high number of deaths associated with medical error every year.

Medication errors are the most common errors.

All health care facilities must have a way of reporting and analyzing errors of any kind whether they be medication or practice errors. It is important that any error be reported in a timely manner. All facilities should have a policy regarding the process for reporting medication and practice errors or any events. At FRMC this reporting is done on a variance report sheet which is now done electronically.

Slide 25

As a new nurse, what workplace issue are you most concerned or worried about?

- A. Floating to an unfamiliar area of the hospital
- B. Mandatory overtime
- C. Horizontal violence
- D. Sexual harassment
- E. Needlestick injuries