

**Unit 6: Workplace Issues**  
**Z-Chapter 25**  
**ONLINE CONTENT (1 H)**

**Unit Objectives:**

- Determine your risk for encountering a workplace issue that can affect your health or well-being. (1,7)\*
- Understand ergonomics and ways to protect yourself from workplace injuries. (5,7)\*
- Analyze workplace bullying and harassment. (3,5)\*
- Recognize the risk for violence at work and how to reduce your risk. (2,5,7)\*
- Create a personal plan to handle workplace problems such as staffing shortages and being assigned to an unfamiliar workplace. (3,7)\*

\*Course Objectives

**Case Studies**

Due March 11, 2024 @ 0800 in the Z-CH # 25 dropbox

1. As a nursing student, Angie learned the proper handling of patients in her fundamentals course. During clinical rotation, Angie is assigned a patient with **left-sided weakness related to a stroke and dementia**. She reviews her notes on positioning, transferring, and handling a patient with musculoskeletal weakness. When entering the patient's room, Angie finds the **patient halfway out of bed**. She rushes to assist the patient to sit and immediately afterwards feels a **sharp pain in her back**. Subsequently, Angie has a **herniated lumbar disk** and is **unable to continue nursing school**.
  - a) How should Angie have approached moving this patient?

Angie should have called for help if she was unable to move the patient on her own. Using proper body mechanics can help prevent back injuries as well. Another method to prevent injuries would be to use assistive devices, such as lift sheets. Even though the patient has left-sided weakness, she could ask the patient if they are able to assist with the transfer back to the bed at all, as even a little assistance can help.
  - b) What did Angie do correctly in this situation?

Angie recognized that the patient was halfway out of bed and has muscle weakness, so they would not be able to fully assist themselves back into the correct position. She acted promptly and helped the patient with the position change to prevent further injury from occurring. She had reviewed her notes on moving patients before entering the patient's room.
  - c) Explain why back problems are the number-one cause of nurse injuries and describe the subsequent effects on nursing care.

Back problems are the number one cause of nurse injuries because nurses are continuously lifting, repositioning, and transferring patients. Nurses also have to reach and stretch in nonergonomic positions when caring for the patient because of the configuration of a patient's room and the

placement of furniture, monitors, and equipment. Back-related injuries reduce the number of nurses available in the workforce, and this leaves nurses who are still able to work more at risk for back-related injuries.

- d) Describe how the “safe patient handling” legislation might have prevented the injury.

This legislation may have prevented the injury because it “requires the Department of Labor to establish a standard on safe patient handling, mobility, and injury prevention to prevent musculoskeletal disorders for healthcare workers.” Having standards in place ensures that healthcare workers know the best way to handle patients and preventing injuries. The workers will then follow these standards and

2. Becky graduated from nursing school a year ago and since then, has worked on a neurology unit. Normally a happy and healthy person, Becky recently noticed that she always feels run down and is losing her hair. During the past year, she was told that her assessment skills were lacking because she missed an important finding on a patient while covering for another nurse. Her supervisor seemingly assigns her high-risk admits every time she works. Her co-workers complain that Becky always gets the lightest patient assignments and should take the admissions. Last week, she overheard another nurse saying, “Becky is almost useless. She spends so much time with her patients she can never help other nurses.” Becky feels physically ill every time she goes to work. She wonders if these “tests” of her nursing skills will ever end.

- a) What type of violence is Becky experiencing?  
Becky is experiencing lateral violence, as she is being bullied by other nurses who are considered her peers.
- b) Which of the signs of bullying from Table 25-1 is (are) evidenced in this scenario?
- c) What steps can Becky take to minimize bullying in the workplace?  
There are three steps to take when being bullied, with the first step being validating the bullying for your own sense of self. After this, seek respite from your work to “bully-proof” yourself. During this time away from work, you need to check your mental health, check your physical health, research state and federal legal options, gather data regarding the economic impact the bully has had on your unit, and start a job search for a new position. Looking for a new job will give you options if addressing

your work situation does not go well. After your time off from work, you need to expose the bully and give your employer an opportunity to address the situation.

d) What can Becky do if her supervisor brushes off her concerns?

If her supervisor brushes off her concerns, she can utilize the information she gathered during her time away from work and look further into the positions she liked during her job search. Her employer doing nothing shows that they will have the same reaction in future situations, and they do not value her like they should. The ANA issued a statement that there is a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence and bullying, so she could possibly report to her state board about the working conditions she is experiencing at this facility.

3. Amanda is caring for an 82-year-old patient with a fractured hip and dementia. In the shift report, she learns that the patient becomes agitated and combative at night. During her evening shift assessment, Amanda notes that the patient does not know where she is or why Amanda is in her room. Amanda remembers her hospital training on dealing with agitated patients by using soothing tones when addressing the patient and ensuring a calm environment. During assessment, the patient yells that Amanda is killing her. She begins swinging at Amanda with the telephone, breaking her jaw. Amanda runs out of the room, and her co-worker calls a "Code White."

a. What is a Code White, and how would it help in this situation?

A Code White is an alert to all staff of a potentially violent situation. This would help in this situation because it gives the nurse resources to deescalate the situation and prevent injury to the patient or further injury to herself.

b. Identify elements of this case that signal a potentially threatening situation.

The nurse learned in report that the patient becomes agitated and combative at night, and the nurse was performing her evening assessment when the patient began hitting Amanda. The patient stated that she does not know where she is or why Amanda is in her room, and this can lead to fearful feelings as she is unsure of her environment. Her fight-or-flight response most likely kicked in, as she was not sure if she is in danger or not. Unfortunately this is the case in a lot of dementia patients, as environments they have been in for some time can suddenly become a strange place.

- c. What preventive measures does the facility have in place to deal with hostile situations?

The facility has the Code White protocol to provide resources to de-escalate the situation. They also teach healthcare workers signs of escalating violence to promptly recognize behaviors and intervene before the situation gets out of hand. Along with ensuring the healthcare workers know the signs of escalation, they make sure that the workers know how to protect themselves during an attack. Policies on units give guidelines for those on each unit specific instructions to follow when these situations arise, although the basic principles remain the same throughout the facility.

- d. If Amanda were floated to another floor where this situation occurred, would this change how she should approach the situation? Explain your answer.

This should not change how she should approach the situation, as observing for signs of escalating violence are used in every unit. She would need to familiarize herself with the unit and determine if there are any specific protocols she would have to follow in the scenario where there is a violent patient. No matter what, she still needs to approach each violent patient with caution and thoroughly assess for any signs of escalating violence. Prompt action can prevent physical violence from occurring as well as preventing injury of either the patient or the nurse.

4. In reviewing available hospital employment, you identify three potential positions as a staff nurse in orthopedics. Because orthopedics is where you would like to work, you evaluate each of the positions:

- Position 1: A regional medical center, with a nurse to patient ratio of 5:1. Total patient care is expected of all nurses, and there is only one nursing assistant assigned to each unit. The hospital recently purchased safe handling equipment for every unit.
- Position 2: An urban hospital with a nurse to patient ratio of 9:1. There is one nursing assistant assigned to every nurse. The hospital has new patient handling equipment, although it is shared between two units.
- Position 3: a local hospital with a nurse to patient ratio 7:1. There is one nursing assistant for every nine patients. The hospital is moving toward Magnet status and uses a shared governance model.

- a) Explore each position in relation to your safety as a nurse. What are the benefits and detriments of each position?

Regarding position one, the nurse-to-patient ratio is the smallest compared to the other two options. There is only one nursing assistant for the entire unit, so delegation would be near impossible. The unit has their own safe patient handling equipment, so there is an easier availability of preventing a workplace injury. When analyzing position two, the nurse-to-patient ratio is the highest of all three choices at 9 to 1. Having a nursing assistance assigned to each nurse can be very beneficial, especially with this many patients assigned. There is safe handling equipment, but it is shared between two units, making the equipment not as accessible. The risk of injury is increased with this because the equipment is shared. The third position has a 7 to 1 patient-to-nurse ratio with one nursing assistant for every nine patients. This position also has shared decision making between the nurses and nursing leaders, as well as working towards reaching Magnet status. Having this status indicates that the facility is the gold standard for nursing practice and innovation. The other two positions did not state any Magnet status. This is considered the middle of the three regarding the nurse-to-patient ratio, and this may make providing adequate patient care difficult.

- b) Which position provides the safest working environment? Explain your response?

The position that provides the safest working environment would be the third position. Although there is a 7 to 1 nurse-to-patient ratio, there is a nursing assistant for every 9 patients. There is not only one for the entire unit like the first position stated. The third facility stated there is a shared governance model in place, which indicates that there is shared decision making between nurses and nursing leaders. Having this team work and collaboration allows for better outcomes. The facility also stated it is reaching Magnet status, and this status indicates a gold standard for nursing practice and innovation. This means that nurses have better opportunities for education and improvement in their position and can promote better outcomes for both the nurse and the patient.

- c) What additional questions should be asked in relation to staffing?

It is important to also ask about the nursing turnover rate to determine how long nurses are staying in their positions at the facility. If possible, ask the nurses how satisfied they are working at this location to get feedback from those in the same position you are applying for. You could also ask if there would be availability of assistance in times of need. Asking if the facility is currently short-staffed could give you a guide as to how overworked you may end up being if you accept a position here.

- d) The hospital in position 3 is described as working towards Magnet status. What impact might this have on your decision to accept or turn down an employment offer?

This status could impact your decision of employment here because it indicates that the hospital has been evaluated and determined to show excellence in providing better nursing care and giving workers education opportunities. Having a Magnet status would most likely positively impact your decision on working here because having better opportunities and education is an important factor for many individuals. The facility has constantly improved their methods of care to provide the best clinical practice as well as patient care. Working at a Magnet status hospital would indicate that the care being given is current and backed up with evidence.

*In order to receive full credit (1 H class time) for this assignment, it must be completed in its entirety by the due date/time assigned. Any assignments not completed in its entirety by the assigned due date and time will result in missed class time.*