

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

Review chapter 25 and place your answers to the following questions in the Z-Chapter 25 dropbox by 0800 on 3/10/2025.

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 started by evaluating the patient's condition. Moving a patient with left-sided weakness and dementia may require more than one person. Angie should have called for assistance from another nurse or PCT. Angie could have used a Hoyer lift or transfer board to safely move the patient and reduce physical strain. She should have kept a stable stance with feet shoulder-width apart, and bent at the knees, not the back, when moving the patient.

- b) What did Angie do correctly in this situation?

Angie demonstrated quick thinking and helped the patient immediately upon finding the patient in an unsafe position. She acted out of desire to prevent harm by assisting the patient.

- c) Explain why back problems are the number one cause of nurse injuries and describe the subsequent effects on nursing care.

Back problems are a leading cause of nurse injuries due to the physical demands of the job, which often requires frequent lifting, bending, twisting, and moving patients.

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

“Safe patient handling” legislation mandates the use of equipment and techniques to prevent manual lifting and handling of patients, to reduce injuries related to physical strain. The legislation usually requires hospitals and healthcare facilities to have mechanical lifts, transfer devices, and other equipment to help with moving and repositioning patients. It sets protocols and expectations that would have required Angie to use the correct equipment or call for help, rather than relying on her own physical strength.

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 workplace bullying, which is a form of psychological violence. This bullying involves repeated, harmful behavior aimed at undermining her confidence, competence, and emotional well-being. Her supervisor and co-workers are subjecting her to unfair treatment, excessive work demands, and unprofessional comments, all of which create a toxic environment for her.

- b) Which of the signs of bullying from Table 25-1 is (are) evidenced in this scenario?

She was assigned very difficult patient loads, with high risk admits every time she works. She was told that her assessment skills were lacking because she missed an important finding for another nurse’s patient. She over hears other nurses talking bad about her behind her back.

- c) What steps can Becky take to minimize bullying in the workplace?

Keep a written record of the bullying incidents. Address the issue with her co-workers or supervisor if possible. She can ask for a fair workload and refuse to accept unprofessional treatment. If the bullying continues, Becky should report the incidents to Human Resources. HR should have policies and procedures in place for addressing workplace bullying.

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

She should go beyond her supervisor and report the bullying to HR or to a higher-level manager who can take the issue seriously. Becky can file a formal complaint if the bullying continues, and her supervisor is not addressing the problem. This formal action might prompt a more thorough investigation.

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 a hospital emergency code used to alert a violent or aggressive situation involving a patient or visitor. It alerts staff members to respond quickly and safely to prevent harm. In this situation, the Code White would alert trained security officers, additional staff, and possibly a rapid response team to assist in de-escalating the situation and ensuring the safety of Amanda and the patient.

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

Due to the patient's dementia, The patient does not recognize Amanda or understand why she is in the room, which could increase agitation. The patient has a known history of becoming agitated and combative at night, which increases the likelihood of this behavior. The patient yells that Amanda is "killing her," which could be a precursor to physical aggression. The patient swings the telephone at Amanda. This shows escalation from verbal to physical violence.

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

Staff are trained in techniques to calm agitated patients, such as using soothing tones, providing reassurance, and maintaining a calm environment. Creating a safer environment, such as soft lighting and reducing noise can help reduce agitation. The use of a code white protocol for violent patients also.

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

Yes, Amanda may not have prior knowledge of the patients on the new floor or their specific behaviors, making it important for her to gather information from report, co-workers, or charts to understand any potential risks. Different units might have specialized protocols for managing aggression. Amanda would need to familiarize herself with these before working on this floor.

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?

Position 1 is a lower nurse-to-patient ratio means you are more likely to have manageable workloads, which can contribute to your safety and patient safety by reducing the chances of errors. You will be expected to provide total patient care, which can be physically demanding. This can lead to increased risk of physical strain or injury, even though the facility recently purchased safe handling equipment.

Position 2 the nurse-to-patient ratio is higher, meaning you'll be responsible for more patients. The support from a nursing assistant can help reduce your physical workload. A higher ratio means a higher workload and greater risk for burnout. This could reduce your ability to safely manage all patients and provide timely care.

Position 3 is a moderately high nurse-to-patient ratio, but you can help keep your workload manageable. There is some assistant support which is also a plus but they will have 9 patient's so the help might be limited. With a 7:1 ratio, you may have a hard time providing high-quality care in a timely manner, which could lead to safety risks both for you and the patients.

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

Position 1 creates the safest working environment for many reasons. This position has the best ratio which can reduce the physical and mental strain on the nurse. The presence of safe handling equipment on every unit also says that the hospital is focused on minimizing injury risk. The one nursing assistant per unit is a limitation but still provides some help.

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

You could ask; what are the turnover rates of the nurses, is there adequate staff when the census is high, how often are the machines available?

- 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?

Magnet hospitals are known for environments that support nurse autonomy, professionalism and high-quality patient care. This can be a sign of a strong culture of safety, collaboration, and staff support. Working within a shared governance model means that nurses have a voice in decision-making, which can increase job satisfaction and your ability to advocate for patient and nurse safety. If the hospital is still working toward Magnet status, it may not yet have all the benefits yet. There may be a transition period where the hospital is still making improvements to its policies, practices, and staffing levels.

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.