

**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?

There is a high risk of falls, Angie should seek help if needed. Use proper body mechanics, assistive devices like a gait belt, transfer board, or slide sheet.

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

Angie acted promptly when she saw the patient halfway out of bed. She had the patient's safety as her first priority, Angie reviewed her notes on positioning, transferring, and handling a patient with musculoskeletal weakness before entering the room.

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

Nurses often lift, transfer, reposition, and move patients throughout their shifts. This can involve lifting heavy or immobile patients, often without the help of proper assistive devices or additional staff. Assist patients without using proper body mechanics (e.g., bending from the back instead of the knees or twisting while lifting). This can lead to muscle strain and long-term injuries. Back injuries can result in time off work, with nurses needing rest,

physical therapy, or even surgery to recover. This can contribute to staff shortages and increased workloads for other nurses, worsening the problem.

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

SPH legislation mandates the use of assistive devices like mechanical lifts, gait belts, slide sheets, and transfer boards to reduce manual patient handling. If Angie had received proper training on how to handle patients safely, she may have been more aware of the risks of moving a patient on her own and would have known to seek assistance or use equipment to prevent her injury. If Angie had followed SPH protocols, she would have been required to assess the patient’s level of mobility and identify the safest approach to prevent injury.

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 horizontal violence, which refers to hostile, aggressive, or negative behaviors exhibited by colleagues of the same professional rank. In her case, her co-workers and potentially her supervisor are engaging in behaviors that undermine her confidence, create a toxic work environment, and contribute to her physical and emotional distress.

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

Unwarranted or Invalid Criticism

Excessive Workload/Unfair Assignments

Being Ignored, Excluded, or Isolated

Gossiping or Spreading Rumors

## Humiliation or ridicu

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

Becky should start keeping a detailed record of all bullying incidents, including dates, times, what was said or done, and who was involved or witnessed the behavior. If Becky feels safe and comfortable, she can address the bully directly in a calm, assertive manner. Becky should report the incidents to her supervisor, manager, or HR department. Becky can reach out to trusted co-workers for support.

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

She should consider escalating the issue to higher levels of management. This might include reaching out to the department manager, nurse manager, or the unit director. She can file a formal complaint with the Human Resources (HR) department. File a formal grievance process that allows employees to raise concerns about workplace issues, including bullying. Becky might consider requesting a transfer to another unit.

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 emergency code used in many healthcare facilities to signal that there is a violent or aggressive patient or visitor who requires immediate intervention. A Code White alerts designated staff trained in handling aggressive or violent situations. These staff members are often specially trained in de-escalation techniques, physical restraint methods, and crisis intervention. This ensures that healthcare workers with the proper skills and experience can respond quickly to contain the situation.
  - b. Identify elements of this case that signal a potentially threatening situation. Patient's diagnosis of dementia, history of being combative and aggressive at night, disorientation and lack of awareness, verbal aggression, and attempting to hit Amanda with an object.

- c. What preventive measures does the facility have in place to deal with hostile situations? Risk assessments are regularly conducted for patients, especially those with known cognitive impairments. Many facilities provide regular de-escalation training for staff, including strategies for calming agitated patients without the use of force. Facilities often have security personnel trained to handle violent situations. A Code White is used to signal a violent or potentially violent situation. Restraints as a last resort protocol as well.
    - d. If Amanda were floated to another floor where this situation occurred, would this change how she should approach the situation? Explain your answer. Amanda may not have the same detailed knowledge of the patients or the unit's specific protocols for handling agitated or combative patients. Amanda must prioritize her personal safety more than ever. Using the general de-escalation techniques she learned in training, Amanda should remain aware of her environment and potential objects that could be used as a weapon in reach of the patient. She should ask about any patients who might exhibit combative behavior.
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: A lower nurse-to-patient ratio (5:1) reduces the workload, allowing nurses to spend more time with each patient. The availability of safe handling equipment is a major benefit.

Cons: Having only one nursing assistant per unit means that nurses might be required to take on additional physical tasks. Nurses are expected to take on total patient care, which could mean more physical and emotional demands.

Position 2: Pros, one nursing assistant per nurse, you are less likely to be required to perform all the physical tasks yourself, such as lifting, repositioning, or assisting with patient mobility. New patient handling equipment can be beneficial to your safety as well. Cons: High Nurse-to-Patient Ratio (9:1). The equipment is new, however it's shared between two units means that there could be delays in access. Increases the risk of musculoskeletal injuries or fall-related accidents.

Position 3: Pros, Magnet Status and Shared Governance Model. Magnet status is a strong indicator of a hospital's commitment to nursing excellence, including nurse safety, career development, and overall well-being. Also enhances your opportunity to further your education. Cons: High Nurse-to-Patient Ratio (7:1). One nursing assistant for every nine patients. The hospital's safe handling equipment situation is not clearly outlined.

- b) Which position provides the safest working environment? Explain your response? Position 1 provides the safest working environment with low nurse-to-patient ratio (5:1). Having safe handling equipment (e.g., patient lifts, transfer boards, and slide sheets) in every unit is a major safety benefit. Nurses are likely to feel less stressed and fatigued, leading to better focus and safer practices when handling patients.
- c) What additional questions should be asked in relation to staffing? What is the typical length of shifts for nurses (12 hours, 8 hours)? Are there any differences in staffing levels between weekdays and weekends? How does the hospital handle situations when there is a shortage of support staff (e.g., vacation, illness)?
- 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? Potential for improved work environment and greater nurse involvement in decision-making. Magnet status hospitals tend to invest in resources for nurses, which could include proper equipment to reduce injury risk, such as safe handling devices for patients with mobility issues. Since the hospital in Position 3 is working towards Magnet status, it may not yet have all the processes, structures, and benefits of a fully Magnet-awarded hospital. Position 3 has one nursing assistant per nine patients, which is a potential concern regarding staffing support for physical tasks such as patient handling.

*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.*