



**Contact:**  
**SCCM:** Joash Mencias  
(630) 344-2009  
[JMencias@pcipr.com](mailto:JMencias@pcipr.com)

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 8:45 A.M. PST, SATURDAY, JAN. 21, 2023**

**Most Critical Care Workers Experience On-the-Job Violence**  
*In first-of-its-kind global survey, critical care professionals report decreased job satisfaction, feeling unprepared for handling violence.*

- The majority of healthcare workers in critical care settings reported experiencing violence in the workplace, according to a survey of clinicians in 69 countries.
- Most reported they felt unprepared to handle violence.
- Nearly half expressed job dissatisfaction due to violence, with 25% saying they are willing to leave their positions.
- The level of violence either stayed the same or increased during the pandemic.

SAN FRANCISCO – A majority of healthcare workers in critical care settings reported facing violence in the workplace, according to a first-of-its-kind global survey on the impact of violence on healthcare workers being presented at the [Society of Critical Care Medicine's \(SCCM\) 2023 Critical Care Congress](#).

Nearly three in four (73%) healthcare workers in critical care settings said they have experienced violence in the past year, with the majority saying it stayed the same or increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Violence Study of Healthcare Workers and Systems (ViSHWaS) survey. The majority of respondents said they felt unprepared to handle violence. Violent episodes led nearly half to experience a decrease in job satisfaction; an additional 25% said they were willing to quit. A majority of respondents reported verbal violence as the most common form, followed by emotional and physical violence and online harassment.

While previous surveys have reported on violence in healthcare settings, the ViSHWaS survey focused on the impact of verbal and emotional abuse and aimed to identify common factors of healthcare violence in more than 100 countries across all healthcare settings. The results indicate the need for additional large-scale studies to further understand the reason for violence and help healthcare workers feel better prepared to de-escalate potentially violent situations and preserve their safety.

“The study is unique in aiming to identify the underlying factors for healthcare violence common across the globe. The results could guide the discussion for the creation of a universally applicable model to mitigate the risk of violence against healthcare workers, especially in critical care settings,” said Tanya Amal, MD, co-lead author of ViSHWaS, part of Global Remote Research Scholars Program 2022.

The survey received 598 responses from 69 countries, mostly from India and the United States. Respondents included nurses, attending physicians, physician residents, physician assistants, registered nurse practitioners, and others in emergency and critical care settings. The most common aggressors were patients or family members.

“The survey findings may be only the tip of the iceberg because the responses represent a small sample of a vast global healthcare community,” said Akshat Banga, MD, co-lead author of ViSHWaS. “Additional research is needed to truly understand the breadth of the problem and how to mitigate violence against healthcare workers.”

Other survey findings by the numbers:

- Half of respondents reported they were familiar with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines, but only 20% felt prepared to handle aggressive situations.
- 63% of respondents reported verbal abuse as the most common violence they experienced.
- 75% reported that the incidence of violence either stayed the same (39%) or increased (36%) during COVID-19 pandemic.
- 48% said they were less motivated/had decreased job satisfaction because of the violence.
- 25% stated they were willing to quit because of experiencing violence.

“Workplace violence harms the individual clinician, increases burnout, and erodes the quality of patient care. Underreported workplace violence is slowly being addressed through legislation,” said Lewis Kaplan, MD, FACS, FCCP, FCCM, former president of SCCM. “SCCM fully supports the Safety from Violence for Healthcare Employees (SAVE) Act, which would help protect healthcare professionals by criminalizing assault or intimidation of hospital employees.”

The ViSHWaS survey comes on the heels of reports of significant healthcare worker burnout and concerns of worker shortages. Every member of the healthcare team is at risk of experiencing workplace violence, Dr. Kaplan said. Specific de-escalation training programs coupled with scenario-based simulation can help develop readily deployable skills.

“Just as SCCM is multiprofessional, the response to workplace violence should embrace security, law enforcement, facility leadership, and rescue resources for clinician victims. While our members take care of patients, we must also take care of one another,” Dr. Kaplan said. In the survey, verbal abuse was defined as threatening language directed at a healthcare worker, and physical abuse ranges from slapping, punching or hitting a healthcare worker.

## **THE SOCIETY OF CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE**

*The Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) is the largest nonprofit medical organization dedicated to promoting excellence and consistency in the practice of critical care. With members in more than 100 countries, SCCM is the only organization that represents all professional components of the critical care team. The SCCM Critical Care Congress brings together intensivists and critical care experts from around the world to share the latest scientific research, develop solutions to common issues, and improve the care of critically ill and injured patients. Visit [sccm.org](http://sccm.org) for more information. Follow @SCCM or visit us on Facebook.*

###