

Case Study

How Real-Time Threat Assessment Helps Hospitals Eliminate Workplace Violence

At Sturdy Memorial Hospital in Attleboro, Mass., real-time notifications of a patient's threat risk and a team-based approach to combatting workplace violence reduces recurrent incidents.



The rise in workplace violence in healthcare is significant, and it's a big reason why hospitals face challenges recruiting and retaining emergency department staff. By identifying patients who are at risk for violence sooner, we can better protect our team and our patients.

Brian Patel

Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs,
Medical Director & Chief Quality Officer,
Sturdy Memorial Hospital

The Challenge

Nearly half of U.S. nurses say workplace violence has increased—more than double the percentage a year ago. It's a factor that discourages some healthcare professionals from remaining in the healthcare profession, contributing to high turnover rates at a time when hospitals can't afford to lose more talent. It also dissuades some professionals from entering the behavioral health field: while incidence of violence among behavioral health patients is small, when patients have other risk factors for aggression, they may lash out at care professionals, putting workers and other patients at risk.

At Sturdy Memorial Hospital, a 126-bed community hospital in Attleboro, Mass., leaders believe addressing workplace violence is critical not just to protect the safety of healthcare professionals, but also to keep them in healthcare. "People go into healthcare to take care of others. They did not sign up to be verbally abused or physically assaulted," says Brian Patel, Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs, Medical Director & Chief Quality Officer, Sturdy Memorial Hospital. "In certain states, there are not good avenues for addressing patient-related violence. It's one reason why healthcare organizations must have proactive mechanisms for preventing violence, including at the point of care."

At Sturdy Memorial, a new initiative that notifies clinicians when a patient presents a high risk of workplace violence and activates the nursing team, emergency department staff, and security to monitor the patient closely and take the appropriate precautions is making an impact.

The Solution

In 2021, Sturdy Memorial established a Threat Assessment Team to establish practices for notifying healthcare providers and staff of a patient's risk for violence at the point of registration and care, especially in the emergency department (ED) and ICU, where risk and vulnerability are high. The team comprises professionals across several disciplines, from case management to nursing, risk management, security, and occupational services.

When patients are identified as having potential to exhibit violence during a care encounter or have demonstrated violent behavior at the hospital, a note is added to the hospital's incident reporting system

Once a month, the Threat Assessment Team reviews these cases and determines whether each patient truly presents a risk for violence. From there, a notation is made to the patient's record in the PointClickCare platform, identifying the patient as a threat risk and providing guidelines for interacting with the patient. When that patient presents in the ED or an inpatient unit, staff receive a real-time alert via the EHR. This prompts staff to notify security so a member of that team can be close at hand.

Similarly, as soon as a patient with a historical violent event at any facility on PointClickCare's nationwide network arrives in Sturdy's ED, alerts are immediately pushed to providers and staff, empowering Sturdy to respond appropriately.

"With these alerts, nursing and ED staff have a better understanding of the risk for violence and can monitor the patient, as appropriate," Patel says. "They also gain a clear view of the types of precautions they should take to protect themselves and others, such as how to approach a specific patient."

Through the PointClickCare platform, the Threat Assessment Team also gains insight into security trends at Sturdy Memorial and throughout their region. This empowers team members to share this information with security and develop precautions that lower the potential for violence in their facility.



“We’ve created a process on the inpatient side where we identify patients with an orange flag if they present a risk for violence, whether it’s due to a medical or psychiatric condition, substance use disorder, or another factor,” Patel says. “The flag is an indicator that is not overtly obvious to patients and visitors but helps alert clinicians and staff to be careful when entering that room. We’re also looking for opportunities to more effectively notify security of an elevated risk for violence earlier in the patient encounter to help ensure a safe environment.”

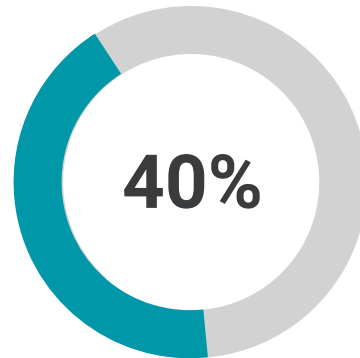
Outcomes

The initiative is still in its infancy, but early results are dramatic. Sturdy Memorial Hospital has experienced fewer recurrent episodes of violence since incorporating EHR notifications regarding patients’ risk for violence and other proactive communications into its care model. It’s a finding that is similar to the experience of hospitals such as Torrance Memorial Medical Center in southern California, which recorded a 40% decrease in assaults when real-time notifications gave team members a better view into the potential for a high-risk encounter with a patient.

Moreover, initiatives such as this help reduce burnout for physicians and clinicians by easing the anxiety of working with emotionally vulnerable patients.

“These solutions help reduce the uncertainty of providing care in high-stress environments. They also give staff a

crucial window into how to make sure patients receive the care and attention they need when they are at their most vulnerable state,” Patel says. “We’re grateful for our work with PointClickCare in delivering the right information at the right time to keep our team and our patients safe.”



Decrease in assaults with real-time notifications

About PointClickCare

PointClickCare is a leading healthcare technology platform enabling meaningful collaboration and access to real-time insights at any stage of a patient’s healthcare journey. PointClickCare’s single platform spans the care continuum, fostering proactive, holistic decision-making and improved outcomes for all. Over 27,000 long-term post-acute care providers, and 2,700 hospitals use PointClickCare today, enabling care collaboration and value-based care delivery for millions of lives across North America..

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