

Empowering ED Providers to Prevent Workplace Violence



Knowing how to provide the best care for those who walk through hospital doors — especially complex patients who have a history of violence, substance use disorder, chronic pain, or mental illness—can be nearly impossible without a clear understanding of a patient’s history.



There are a lot of workplace threats taking place that are alarming. I think a lot of us in medicine have begun to feel a little beaten down — and have adopted the attitude that behaviors we wouldn’t tolerate in normal society are okay in the ED, including verbal and physical abuse. Taking care of patients has become a dangerous job, and it’s not supposed to be.

David Presser, MD, MPH,
Associate Chief Medical Officer at
Torrance Memorial Medical Center

The Challenge

Finding an Empathetic but Safe Approach to Patient Care

When it comes to emergency medicine, providers face the difficult balance between providing safe, high-quality, and empathetic care. Treating a patient with chronic pain, assessing a patient in a behavioral health crisis, and caring for a patient with a history of violence or abuse all require providers to lead with empathy. They must also exercise some level of caution as they determine the best plan of care for these patients.

For providers at Torrance Memorial Medical Center (Torrance Memorial), a 512-bed, nonprofit medical center in southern California, the key to finding this balance started with a more informed picture of the patients who come to their ED for help.

The Solution

Communicating Problems Early for Better Patient Outcomes

A collaborative team of case managers, social workers, nurse leaders, and physicians came together to determine an approach that met the unique needs of more vulnerable, complex patients who were noted as having high utilization. Using the ED Optimization solution from PointClickCare, care plans could be set to automatically surface within provider workflows, helping the ED staff instantly know key patient information and determine the best steps to immediately treat that individual.

The staff at Torrance Memorial also receive insights that flag patients with a potential for violent behavior and alert security personnel as soon as these patients present at the ED. This helps the care team to take precautionary measures like isolating patients in secure areas for preliminary weapons screenings, or security escorts to exam areas or off the property at the end of the visit. In addition, patients who have a history of violence may be asked to enter into a behavioral contract, outlining appropriate and inappropriate behavior — including threats of violence or intimidation against providers — before beginning treatment. These behavioral contracts are signed by the patient and uploaded into the PointClickCare platform for future use.

Having more complete information at registration enables the providers to de-escalate potentially abusive situations, which leads to smoother patient visits, happier staff, and less disruption in care. Dr. Presser at Torrance Memorial shares, “The staff at Torrance are motivated and excited individuals who want to provide the best care for our patients. In improving patient safety, we’re ensuring that we have control of the clinical environment — and doing right by the patient in the process.”

Outcomes

Torrance Memorial’s focus on collaborative care plans for complex patients — combined with PointClickCare’s real-time notifications — has empowered ED staff with the information they need to confidently treat and care for their patients.

“Knowing the plan beforehand has given our providers the confidence to know that they can handle these situations with violent patients if they arise and helped us feel like

Patient Anecdotes

Dr. Presser shares one example of the importance real-time information plays in preventing workplace violence.



We were working with one patient who had some issues with chronic pain, which meant he was frequently visiting the ED. He had repeatedly made fairly aggressive and menacing threats. Now, our director of security receives alerts whenever the patient registers and accompanies him throughout his visit. The patient has a behavioral contract which he agrees to abide by, and this has helped our visits go more smoothly and minimized disruption for our other patients as well.

we have control over the safety of our environment. But it has also helped us work from our points of strength. With patient info readily accessible, we can prescribe medications and treatments from a point of knowledge, better transition patients to appropriate outpatient care settings, and look at patients’ health holistically for overall better outcomes.”

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