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Keynote Address

Abstract

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Nursing in a Violent World

For many nurses the word violence raises concerns surrounding being verbally and/or physically assaulted at work. There is no doubt that in many countries nurses are at high risk of becoming the victims of violence in the workplace, especially in high acuity clinical locations such as emergency departments and mental health inpatient facilities. In acknowledgment of such concerns there is a growing research literature addressing the impact of violence exposure for nurses and the problem is given high priority by the profession, health service managers and policy-makers. However, the workplace is only one context within which nurses must deal with violence. In a world in which violence is never far away, nurses have an important role to play in responding to health and mental health problems arising from social problems as diverse as bullying, violence between intimate partners, the maltreatment of children, the abuse of elders, terrorism and armed conflict. This keynote address considers the consequences for health and mental health of exposure to various forms of violence and the role of nurses in responding to the needs of the victims of violence. It will be argued that recent upsurges of violence both in peaceful communities and in regions affected by armed conflict will both challenge and provide health leadership opportunities for nurses.