

Study calls for student nurses to be prepared for violence

6 January 2015, by Pepita Smyth



A considerable number of Western Australian nursing students are exposed to aggression and violence while on clinical placement, it has been revealed in new research from Murdoch University.

PhD student Martin Hopkins conducted the first ever survey of [violence](#) towards nursing students in Australia, recording both the prevalence and type of [aggression](#) experienced.

Around 150 students enrolled in their second and third years of their Bachelor of Nursing program participated in the study, where they had clinical placements in aged care, mental health and acute care in WA metropolitan hospitals.

"It is widely reported that nurses are extremely likely to experience some form of aggression in the workplace during their careers but there is little evidence to inform the prevalence or level of risk undergraduate nursing students are exposed to," Mr Hopkins said.

"Even more importantly, nobody has examined the impact aggression and violence has on [nursing students](#), or how to adequately prepare them."

Mr Hopkins found that more than one-third of second year students experienced [physical violence](#) in a clinical setting, and that around half of those students were exposed to more than one incident.

Students had been punched, slapped, grabbed, bitten and pushed, and some students had sustained an injury from the incident resulting in time off work.

One patient had even attempted to stab a student.

Around 25 per cent of third year students reported physical violence with 40 per cent of these feeling regularly at risk in the workplace.

Non-physical violence was more of a problem for the students with around 60 per cent of second and third year students experiencing abuse both from patients, relatives and other healthcare workers.

"These levels of aggression and violence are serious cause for concern, with the potential to damage students' physical and psychological well-being," Mr Hopkins said.

"It may also impact levels of student retention in nursing degrees.

"There is a real need for aggression and violence education to be integrated into the nursing curriculum so that [students](#) are adequately prepared for clinical settings."

This research was recently published in *Contemporary Nurse*.

Provided by Murdoch University

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