

Treasury. Publications on Accidents at work in 1990-1995 and newspaper articles were utilized to provide complementary information on the fatalities related to violence at work.

RESULTS: During 1994-1999, altogether 3101 occupational accidents were related to violence, the average annual number being about 500. 42% of the violent injuries happened to female workers. The majority of the violent injuries occurred in the service sector (38%), health care and social services (24%), transport (13%) and in the retail trade (12%). The most hazardous occupations per 1000 employees were hotel receptionists, restaurant service workers, police officers and protective service workers. For men, the majority of occupational accidents related to violence occurred among workers aged 25 to 34 years. For women, the number of occupational accidents increased with age, and the occupational accidents related to violence generally happened to workers aged 45 to 54 years. During 1990-1998 there were 17 fatal occupational accidents related to violence. Four of these happened to women. In 1990-1998 the average annual rate of workplace homicide per 100 000 workers was 0.10. The highest rates were found for police officers, with the annual rate of 5.42 per 100 000 police officers. Work-related violence is a serious risk to which more attention has to be paid also in Finland in the future.

CONCLUSION: The results show that the risk of occupational violence in Finland was highest in service jobs where workers are in close contact with customers, especially with those who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Occupational violence is a risk especially for women, since almost half of the violent injuries occurred among female workers, whereas of all occupational accidents only one third occurred to women. Although there were fatal occupational accidents related to violence every year only two out of altogether of about 50 fatal occupational accidents were related to violence.

LIMITS: Not all of the violence-related occupational accidents are reported to the insurance companies, only the most serious ones. That is why the results are only suggestive, but the results of interview studies nevertheless indicate similar results and point to the same risk occupations.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROJECT TO THE FIELD: The study reveals several occupations that are particularly subjected to violence-related occupational accidents. This knowledge enables the establishment of safety measures and preventive measures (i.e. training and guidelines) directly to these sectors.

ASSAULTS AGAINST CAREGIVERS IN NURSING HOMES

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PROBLEM UNDER STUDY: Increasing violence against healthcare workers prompted OSHA to publish guidelines in 1996 regarding the actions employers must take to protect their employees from violence. The worker at greatest risk for non-fatal assault is the nursing assistant (NA) working in long-term care.

OBJECTIVES: The aims of this study were to describe the context in which the assaults occur and to test an educational intervention to decrease the incidence of assaults against NAs in nursing homes.

METHOD OR APPROACH: Six nursing homes were randomly chosen to participate in the study, three intervention and three comparison. All full-time, English speaking NAs were encouraged to participate in the study; the data collection and intervention took place at the nursing homes. One hundred and thirty eight subjects volunteered to participate in the study. Each NA carried an Assault Log for 80 hours of work both before and after the intervention and recorded the following information when an assault occurred:

1. Number of residents assigned;
2. Diagnosis of resident who assaulted;
3. Type of assault;
4. Care-giving activity being performed when assaulted; and
5. Whether an injury occurred.

The intervention, based on Social Cognitive Theory, consisted of educational and problem-solving sessions.

RESULTS: Findings include the following:

1. Total number of assaults was 624;
2. Mean number of assaults was 4.69 with a range of 0–67;
3. Number of NAs with no assaults was 39 (29%); and
4. Mean number of assaults for those NAs with at least one assault (N=94) was 6.64. Of the 624 assaults, 51% included hitting or punching and 40% included grabbing, pinching, or pulling hair. Of the 624 assaults, 43% occurred during dressing or changing and 26% during turning or transferring. For four nursing homes (N=88), two comparison and two intervention, there was a significant decrease ($p<.05$) in the number of assaults for the intervention group.

CONCLUSION: This study demonstrates that assaults against NAs in nursing homes are frequent events for many NAs. Findings indicate that the incidence of assaults can be reduced through an educational intervention. Further data analysis is needed to examine how variables such as staff-resident ratio, resident diagnosis, and characteristics of the worker are related to the incidence of assault.

LIMITS: There is a possibility of selection bias since subjects volunteered to participate. The representativeness of the sample may be limited since subjects were all English speaking and working in nursing homes in a specific geographical location.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROJECT TO THE FIELD: Traditionally, aggressive Behaviour by nursing home residents, sometimes resulting in injury, has not been addressed as a health and safety problem for NAs. This study raises awareness about the working conditions of NAs who provide 90% of the hands-on care to residents. The elderly population is expected to increase 17 percent from 1995 to 2010 and 75 percent from 2010 to 2030. Along with this aging population it is expected that the need for nursing home beds and NAs will also increase. Improving the working conditions for NAs will not only improve their health and safety, but also that of the residents.

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