

Violence against Health Care Providers in India



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Violence against health care providers is a disturbing phenomenon becoming rampant in India making our country one of the most unsafe places for doctors to work. The World Health Organization defines workplace violence in the health sector as "Any incident where a member of healthcare staff is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work, including commuting to and from work, and those which cause an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety and wellbeing."¹

In a study by Indian medical association (IMA) it is reported that 75% of the doctors in India have faced violence in some part of their life.² Studies have shown that 30% of dentists have faced violence in their clinics. The reasons for the violence in dental clinics were identified as the high cost of dental treatment, long waiting time, cancellation of appointments and patients intoxicated with alcohol.³

One of the important reasons for the increased incidence of violence against health care workers is

the breakdown of the patient -doctor relationships. In a materialistic world like ours the sanctity of this relationship is often forgotten and the patient - doctor relationship is degraded into a buyer-seller relationship. Here patient is only a consumer and doctors are just service providers. Often the patients are driven by fear of exploitation and doctor by fear of retribution. So, the patient doctor relationship is often driven by fears of exploitation and retribution, not by trust.⁴

What steps can be taken in order to avoid the violence in a healthcare setting like a dental clinic? (1) Identifying the patient related characteristics related to violence (2) Better communication and improved relationship with the patients, (3) Prompt and stringent action against perpetrators of violence by the law enforcement.^{1,4}

The key to restoring doctor-patient trust is to improve the communication and provide better understanding on the medical knowledge, so that patients will have reasonable expectations of treatment.⁴

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