

Kerang District Health Occupational Violence

Research shows that occupational violence and aggression (OVA) in healthcare is a major Occupational Health and Safety concern, with up to 95% of healthcare workers reporting to have experienced some form of violence in their workplace. Despite this, current research suggests that only 20% of violent incidents are reported.

Most healthcare workers want to help others when they're at their most vulnerable. But we are facing a serious issue in our healthcare sector.

Workers are regularly confronted with violence and aggression – from patients and residents, visiting friends and family, even bystanders.

The people who behave this way are not just those under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or those who are not of full capacity of mind. Often it's everyday people who find themselves in a stressful situation.

No matter the situation, aggression and violence against healthcare workers is never OK.

WorkSafe, working together with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is launching an evidence-based, best practice public awareness campaign to help address the issue of occupational violence and aggression in the healthcare sector.

Unacceptable behaviour can have a negative impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of our healthcare workers.

Most of us understand that extreme acts of violence are unacceptable. But not everyone realises there is a scale of violence and aggression. Some examples include:

- aggressive gestures or expressions such as eye rolling and sneering
- verbal abuse such as yelling, swearing and name calling
- intimidating physical behaviour such as standing in a healthcare worker's personal space or standing over them
- physical assault such as biting, spitting, scratching, pushing, shoving, tripping and grabbing
- extreme acts of violence and aggression such as hitting, punching, strangulation, kicking, personal threats, threats with weapons, sexual assault.

None of these are ok. Being exposed to these incidents repetitively can have a cumulative and significant ongoing effect on wellbeing.

Up to 95% of healthcare workers in Victoria have experienced verbal or physical assault
No matter what the situation, it's never OK.

There is a 'spectrum' of violence and aggression – extreme acts of violence such as punching and kicking, as well as 'less extreme' acts of aggression like yelling, threatening people, and making aggressive gestures, are never OK. They all have an impact on our healthcare workers.

Even if a patient or bystander does not have full capacity of mind, these acts of aggression are still not OK and should be reported. Employers should be working towards minimising these incidents as best as possible by providing training and preventative solutions for their staff. Incidents of verbal or physical assault towards healthcare workers are currently chronically under reported.

If you're a healthcare worker, report aggressive and violent behaviour to your employer, so together we can work towards reducing these incidents and stop it happening to you or your colleagues again.

Kerang District Health has a policy about Occupational Violence, and people who show aggression or abuse towards our staff can expect that the police may be involved, and there will be consequences for such behaviour.

“It's never okay”