

Bullying in Nursing: The Need to Make Change Happen

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This presentation will describe preliminary work regarding the phenomenon of bullying within the nursing profession in Australia. Workplace bullying in Australia is not a recent phenomenon and appears to be increasing. Anecdotally, nurses have likened their clinical setting to that of a 'battlefield' and describe the environment in which they work as a place of professional turmoil.

This research will explore bullying and other forms of incivility in the nursing profession in Australia. The study will focus in particular on the factors that contribute to bullying and allow it to persist in the various settings in which nurses are employed.

There is a significant body of academic research on the nature and incidence of bullying in nursing that has greatly contributed to our understanding of the individual, organisational and social factors that contribute to its persistence. In spite of this, bullying remains a pervasive issue within the nursing profession. There is little substantive data from Australian nurses on the contributing factors that allow bullying to continue in the workplace. Less work exists on how to identify and counter it. The research described in this presentation aims to assist nurse leaders, educators and policymakers to better understand bullying in the Australian health care workforce and thus inform strategies to address the problem. Understanding and recognising the phenomenon of bullying will ensure the best possible outcomes for the nursing profession and, more importantly, the patients for whom we provide care.

Making change happen in the area of bullying within the nursing profession requires us to not only acknowledge 'the elephant in the room', but also examine closely the antecedents and impacts of this increasingly pernicious phenomenon. Bullying occurs in all organizations, and nurses need to develop the capabilities to manage it when it occurs.