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## The Issue Of Nurse Bullying At The Workplace

For many people, when they think of bullying, it may bring to mind the image of a mean child picking on another either in school or on a playground. Although this is often the case, in some instances, bullying also occurs with adults in the workplace. The profession of nursing is no exception to this.

The American Nurses Association (ANA) defines bullying as “repeated, unwanted, harmful actions intended to humiliate, offend, and cause distress in the recipient. Bullying actions include those that harm, undermine, and degrade” (Laws, 2016). Workplace bullying is a serious issue that affects nurses of all ages, genders and ethnicities. It also exists in many forms and effects not only the individual who is targeted, but also aspects of the job such as job satisfaction, performance and the workplace as a whole. Bullying crosses all generational lines and encompasses all groups. The nursing workforce today consists of three generational groups: Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials. Each group may target, and be targeted in different ways and for different reasons. For example, Baby Boomers may engage in bullying behaviors toward younger nurses in an attempt to make the younger nurse prove herself or “pay her dues” (Townsend, 2016). On the opposite end of the spectrum, younger nurses can bully older nurses by treating them as if they are old school and their way of doing things is outdated and not up with the times (Townsend, 2016).

Bullying behaviors can have serious effects on the individual being bullied. Among these are feelings of defenselessness or isolation, anxiety and depression. Physical effects may also occur such as chronic headaches, insomnia, eating issues, and cardiovascular issues such as high blood pressure (Laws, 2016). Workplace bullying negatively affects not only the individual who is being bullied, but also the workplace as a whole. It can create a toxic work environment where issues can arise with the break-down of communication and the lack of teamwork. These issues can negatively affect the quality of patient care (Townsend, 2016).

If bullying is not properly dealt with it may lead to more serious problems for the workplace such as difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, and higher nurse turnover rates. With their already being a shortage of nurses, the profession cannot afford to lose more employees as a result of bullying (Laws, 2016). Workplace bullying can also have a serious financial impact due to reduced patient satisfaction. Patient dissatisfaction can result from things such as nurse absenteeism, high turnover rates and lowered productivity (Laws, 2016). Organizations such as the Joint Commission and The American Nurses Association have taken a stand against bullying and have created systems and processes to hold nurses accountable for their actions. These policies hold all team members accountable for exhibiting and modeling professional behaviors as well as creating an environment of respect that is free of unacceptable behaviors such as bullying in the workplace (Laws, 2016).

In conclusion, nurse bullying in the workplace affects persons of all ages and experience levels, and has adverse effects on the victim, the organization and the patients. Putting an end to this destructive behavior requires a zero-tolerance policy, good managerial modeling and implementing policies and procedures that will ensure that bullying does not continue. All health care workers have a responsibility to provide and support a safe, healthy workplace

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environment that is free from harassment and abuse.

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