Improving the Safety and Well-Being of Nursing Staff in Psychiatric Settings

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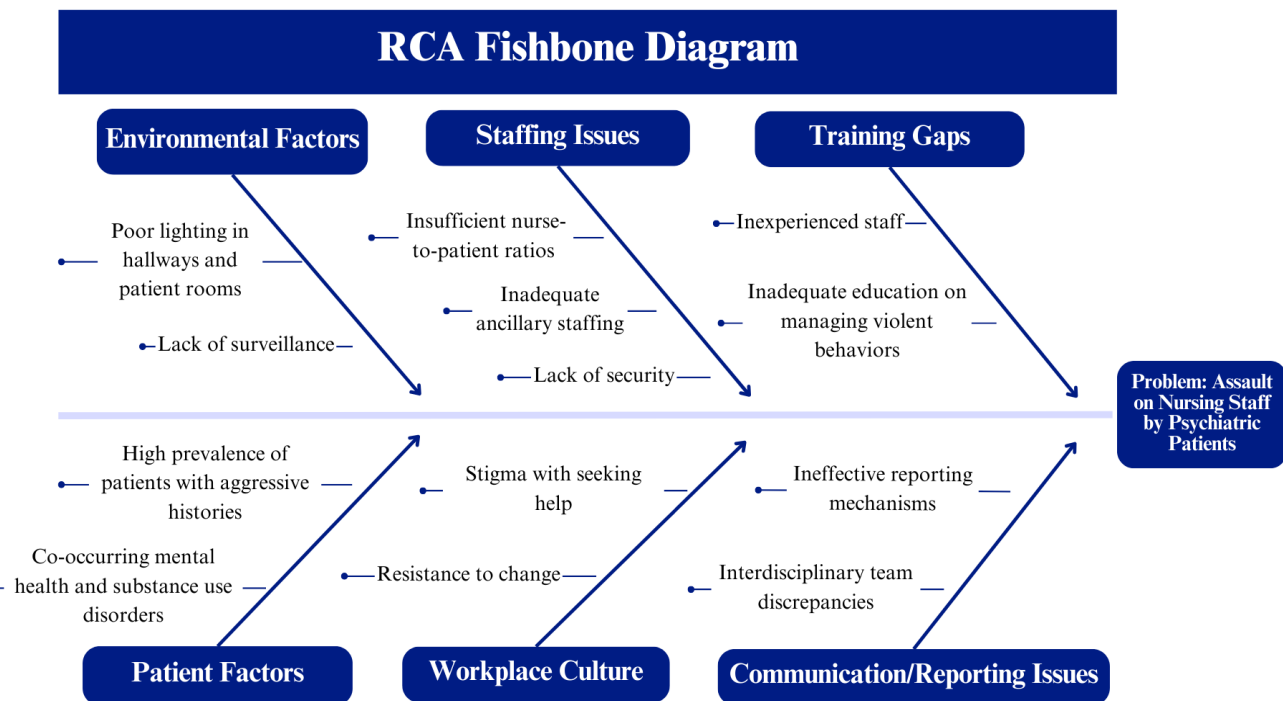Sharon G. Casavant, PhD, RN

Background

- Nurses in psychiatric settings face a significantly higher risk of workplace violence, with assault rates reaching 50-70% during their careers.

- These incidents compromise nurse well-being, patient care, and healthcare system stability

Purpose

Hypothetical quality improvement (QI) project aimed to reduce assaults on nursing staff in psychiatric inpatient units.

Identifying Root Causes of Assault on Nursing Staff

RCA Fishbone Diagram

Environmental Factors
- Poor lighting in hallways and patient rooms
- Lack of surveillance

Staffing Issues
- Insufficient nurse-to-patient ratios
- Inadequate ancillary staffing
- Lack of security

Training Gaps
- Inexperienced staff
- Inadequate education on managing violent behaviors

Problem: Assault on Nursing Staff by Psychiatric Patients

Patient Factors
- High prevalence of patients with aggressive histories
- Co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders

Workplace Culture
- Stigma with seeking help
- Resistance to change

Communication/Reporting Issues
- Ineffective reporting mechanisms
- Interdisciplinary team discrepancies

Methods

A multi-faceted approach including:
- De-escalation training
- Environmental modifications
- Enhanced incident reporting systems
- Peer support networks

Implications

- Safety interventions can significantly reduce workplace violence in psychiatric settings
- Potential for widespread improvement across psychiatric units nationally due to standardization of de-escalation training