Introduction

According to the WHO framework Guidelines (2002), Workplace violence is defined as “the situations where staffs are ill-treated, intimidated or attacked in conditions linked to their workplace, including commuting to and from the workplace, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health”. Workplace violence against doctors is a global phenomenon. Compared to all other workers, workplace violence seen in healthcare workers is four times higher and hence requires a longer time away from work. It can be physical violence or psychological violence or a combination of both. It can be in any form like assault, abuse, bullying, mobbing, harassment either sexual or racial or psychological, threat, etc. It has neither any region nor religion.\(^1\) As per the Indian Medical Association (IMA), over 80% of doctors are stressed out in their profession and nearly 56% don't sleep comfortably for 7 hours a day. The same IMA report states that 46% feel violence is the main cause of stress.\(^2\)

Warning Signs of Violence

- The STAMP (Staring, Tone, Anxiety, Mumbling, Pacing) approach alerts the physician by looking for early warning signs of violence. The STAMP approach consists of the following:
  - Staring is a prospective sign of violence. Staring was to threaten them into a quicker response.
  - Tone and volume of voice are connected with violent episodes. Most cases involve not only raised voices and yelling but also sarcasm and caustic replies.
  - Anxiety in coming to the emergency department makes patients stressed out. Before it reaches dangerous levels, ideally the doctor intervenes, but sometimes, it escalates to violence due to patient anxiety.
  - Mumbling is an indication of violence as it reflects frustration.
  - Pacing by relatives is seen as a symbol of agitation.

A study was conducted by Naveen Kumar P et al., in the light of growing number of violent acts perpetrated by patients and visitors on healthcare givers in India. The challenges hospitals face is to mitigate, control, and respond to violence within the caring nature of the hospital environment. An act of violence has an impact on the patients’ well-being, the healthcare providers as well as the hospital. Violence harms patients by changing or reducing care providers’ attitudes toward them. It takes away the concentration from care providers. Violence also harms the reputation of the

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hospitals. A hospital’s brand and reputation influence the physician’s choice of where to practice and helps job seekers decide where to apply and work.\(^3\)

**Prevention of Violence Against Doctors\(^4\)**

With the rise in mob violence incidents, doctors are also becoming cautious and reluctant to take up serious and grave cases, which in turn compromises healthcare which defeats the purpose of the healthcare delivery system. Unless we make the hospital environment free from fear and violence, the doctors won’t be able to work to their maximum potential, and hence, stopping the violence against doctors is of paramount importance. Several Steps Can Be Taken in This Direction-

1. **Government Policies and Responsibilities**

   There should be a change in government policies like increased government spending on healthcare, improving the infrastructure of the hospitals, stricter implementation of rules, laws and punishment for violence under the Prevention of Violence against Doctors and Hospitals according to appropriate Acts and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Violence against health-care personnel and hospitals should be made a nonbailable offense and damages should be recovered from the persons responsible for the violence. The government should take responsibility for the safety of healthcare workers.

2. **Steps to be taken by the Doctor**

   The doctors should take a few precautions while taking valid and informed consent. Audio-visual consent is preferred. Proper documentation must be done in every case. The next important thing is communication which should be done preferably in the patient’s native language by improving communication skills. They should not try to overdo or overreact and remain calm and composed.

3. **Steps to be taken by the Institution**

   A standard operating procedure should be made and followed strictly. Code Purple should be declared and all measures should be taken in case of violence. Security staff should respond and assist immediately. All staff (except Operation Theatre & ICU) should form a human chain and should remain calm. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) monitoring in sensitive areas is a must and in case of any violence it should be reported to the Police immediately.

4. **Steps to be Taken by The Patient**

   The patient should be aware of the health situation. They need to understand that Doctors practice medicine they can’t do magic and certainly and not everyone can be revived. Doctor cannot be held responsible for every death occurring in the hospital on the grounds of negligence. If they are not satisfied with a doctor, they can speak to the concerned authority and take an appropriate decision to continue treatment or not.

5. **Steps to be Taken by Media**

   Media must put forward the unbiased news. It should not sensitize the news. It should highlight the doctor’s predicament and the causes for the rise in violence against them.

6. **Role of Medical Schools**

   The medical school can play an important role in creating awareness about workplace violence against doctors. Along with the medical subjects they should also teach about patient-doctor relations, communication with the patient in an effective way, empathy towards the patients and their relatives. The school should also teach them how to handle tactfully when the patients or their relatives behave aggressively and when the situation turns chaotic and violent. They should teach them how to remain calm and responsible during those times without compromising the quality of patient care as well as safety.

**End Note**

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