

Patient Strangles ER Nurse with a Stethoscope

With little support, she chooses to end her career

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“I had been a nurse in the Emergency department for over 23 years and have worked with hundreds of patients. I've been assaulted more times than I can count, but this episode made me realize how it feels when you seek for help and it was taken lightly. The response from my coworkers and administration was a shrug of the shoulder an eye roll and, “I don't know what to tell you.” I knew the only way to keep myself safe was to end my career in this institution and move on.”

I interviewed this nurse and found she was still having difficulty talking about the assault. She stated she wasn't sure what this episode did to her to make her realize how unsafe the job was. However, she stated it didn't matter because she wasn't going to be hurt for life at any job. Especially a job that her peers and the administration didn't care about her, as an important part of the team.

Her Story...

“I knew after I received report from EMS that I needed security for backup, the patient had just got out of jail and went to a shelter. The shelter sent her to us because of the complaints she had. You know that gut feeling reaction we get when we know something is not right?”

The security came and said to the patient, “Be nice to the nurse.” They left the alcove while I was in with the patient. I knew the minute they left that I was in trouble. She reached over the stretcher and pulled my stethoscope that was around my neck and twisted it. She was strangling me and tried to hit my face. I

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yelled and ran out of the room.” I was able to get out of her hold when I stepped back and twisted my body.” I was shaking so bad, so frightened, I needed to take some time to get myself together.

I needed to pick up another patient. I felt no one cared about what just happened to me. That’s when I decided to give my notice to leave.

What happened after giving her notice? Nothing happened. No one cared, they will get someone else to do the job.

What Would Have Made Her Stay?

She was a nurse that no matter what came through the doors of the ER she could respond to it, without hesitation. She has seen it all, cradle to grave. I asked if there was any way she would have changed her mind and stayed at the hospital. After a long time and tears in her eyes, she said. “If only my coworkers could have listened to me and understood the difficult time I was having. **WE have all been assaulted**, we all know what getting assaulted does to you. I did have a supervisor and a medical assistant talk to me, I am grateful someone took the time to at least listen to me. But maybe if the administration came to me and asked “what can we do for you and to make the place safe?” I might have given it more thought. I left the job I loved and knew. I just don’t want to get hurt again.”

I have not seen any statistics about nurses leaving their job after being assaulted. If anyone has them, please forward to www.stophealthcareviolence.org. Thank You!

If the administration and healthcare workers worked together, the environment would be more safe.

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Check your job descriptions, does any job require you to be harmed? Work together and stop this violence.

In the State of Massachusetts, we only have a misdemeanor if a healthcare worker gets assaulted. We are working on a bill that has been introduced by Rep. Bruce Ayers to make it a felony. If you live in MA and want to [help support the bill](#), please call your representative and state you are in favor of Bill #1164.

Figure 1 Click for full interview

