

“ Violence In The E.D. Ended My Career”

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“I've been a nurse in the emergency department for 23 years. I worked with hundreds of patients and have been assaulted more times than I can count. This episode made me realize that when I asked for help it was being taken too lightly. The response from my coworkers and managers consisted of a shrug of the shoulder, eye roll, and an “ I don't know what to tell you”. I knew the only way to keep myself safe was to end my career and move on.”

The incident that ended her career

“I knew after I received report from EMS that I needed security for backup. The patient had recently gotten out of jail and was living in a shelter. The shelter sent her to us because of the complaints she was having. I asked if they called security and they answered with a “yes”. Security then came in and said to the patient “be nice to the nurse” and then exited the room that the patient and I were in. 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. She twisted it so that it was strangling me. She then tried to hit my face. I yelled and ran out of the room. I was able to get away from her by stepping back and twisting my body. I was shaking and very frightened. I needed to take some time to get myself together but that didn't happen. I needed to pick up another patient right away. I felt as if not one person cared about what had just happened to me. That's when I decided to give my notice to leave.”

After listening to this nurse's story, I stopped to ask her what the response was when she gave her notice. She looked surprised at my question and stated “nothing happened, no one cared”, “They acted as if they will just get someone else to do the job.”

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Be the co-worker that cares

She was a nurse that no matter what came through the doors of the ER she could and would 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 pause and tears in her eyes she said, “If only my coworkers would have listened to me and tried to understand what I was going through”.

We have all been assaulted and we all know what getting assaulted does to you. If the administration had come to me to ask, “What can we do for you and to make this place safer?” I might have given it a second thought, but they didn’t. Instead I left a job I loved.



Figure 1 Click to watch the full interview