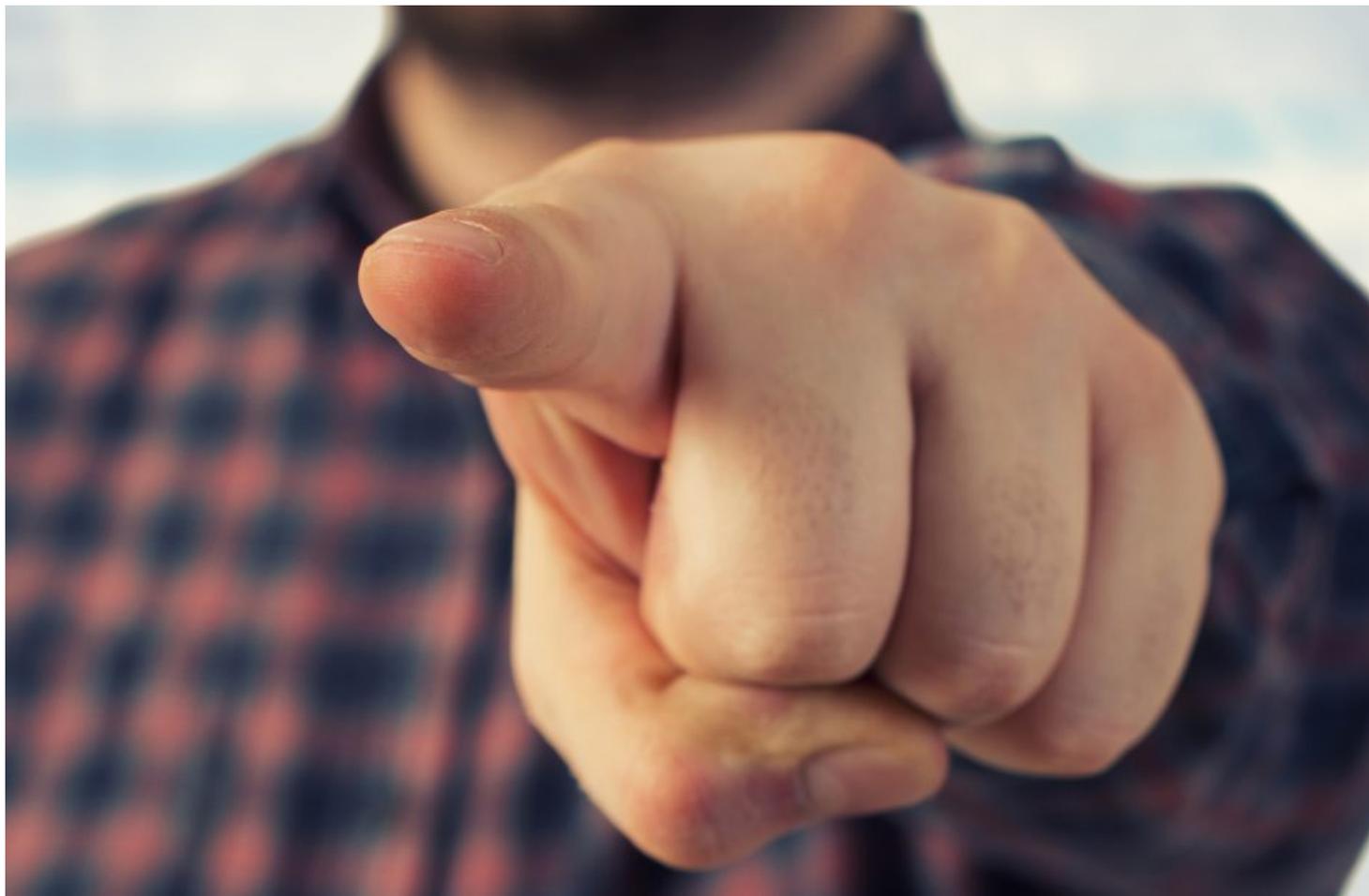


WORKFORCE

Union calls for 'honest conversation' with public to halt abuse against health staff

10 AUGUST, 2021 | BY MEGAN FORD



Source: Ingimage

More than a third of doctors have faced recent verbal attacks from patients or visitors, while over a quarter have witnessed violence or abuse against their nursing colleagues, results of a survey have revealed.

A survey of more than 2,400 doctors and medical students carried out by the British Medical Association (BMA) in early July found 37% had experienced verbal abuse from patients or their friends or families in the past month, while 16% reported they had been threatened and 2% physically assaulted in the same time period.

“These behaviours are causing staff members, from receptionists to nurses and GPs, to want to quit”

Anonymous GP

Concerningly, more than half (53%) said action was taken following these experi

Meanwhile, 29% said the incident was reported, 7% said the perpetrator was re from the doctor's list and 3% said the p

had been called.

Other data from the survey revealed that more than half (51%) had witnessed violence or ab directed at other staff in their workplace in the past year.

In total, 655 doctors – equating to 26% of all those who took part in the survey – said it was staff who had been the target.

Further analysis showed that of the 1,355 doctors who worked in a hospital setting and had colleague being abused, 87% (467) said it had been against nurses.

In addition, among the 127 doctors who worked in a community setting and said they had witnessed other staff facing abuse, 73% (43) said nurses had been the target.

Meanwhile, 22% of all participants said they had seen other doctors being abused, and 14% they had witnessed abuse against healthcare assistants.

Survey participants were asked to compare their experiences of threatening behaviour, viole verbal abuse from patients and visitors, to that of a year ago.

In response, 42% said incidents had increased, while 44% said the levels of abuse remained same. Just 4% said these instances had decreased.

Those surveyed reported several factors that they felt were behind the incidents, such as th perpetrator having a history of violence or abuse (20%), that the perpetrator had health-rela

personal problems, or that they were intoxicated with alcohol or drugs (17%).

“There must be an honest public conversation about the precarious state the NHS now finds itself in, to prevent staff bearing the brunt of frustration and anger”

Richard Vautrey

However, the majority (64%) said they had received abuse because the perpetrator was “dissatisfied” with the service provided, including access to it.

An anonymous female GP partner in the West said: “We get shouted at, spoken

harshly and called 'unkind' and 'unhelpful', often for things that are not within our control, such as hospital waiting lists, and the fact that we have to ask people to be considerate of others to keep everyone safe, by doing things such as getting tested for Covid, and not coming in when they have Covid symptoms.”

She also recalled being called “the most horrifically offensive name” after asking a patient to come into the surgery waiting room with a cough and instead pointed them towards a separate clinic where people with Covid-19 symptoms could be seen.

“I was also told to ‘go back to where you come from’ by a patient who was unhappy at me but unable to tell him when he would be seen in hospital,” she added.

She also cited “misleading headlines about practices being closed”, which she said “haven’t happened at all”.

“These behaviours are causing staff members, from receptionists to nurses and GPs, to want to quit,” the GP added.

“Our local practice managers are so distressed by the unrelenting complaints and poor behaviour that they are leaving in droves.

“The social contract that general practice prides itself on being built on seems to have broke and people think it's ok to be rude and unkind.”

Meanwhile, Dr Richard Vautrey, BMA GP committee chair, said: “The last year-and-a-half has been an incredibly challenging time for both doctors and patients, and many doctors share the frustration of their patients around unfamiliar ways of working, or if waiting times are too long. However, abuse, violence and threats are absolutely unacceptable and should never be tolerated.”

Dr Vautrey called for an “honest public conversation, led by the government and NHS England about the precarious state the NHS now finds itself in after 18 months of managing a pandemic that people have realistic expectations, and to prevent staff bearing the brunt of frustration and anger”.

These latest results follow widespread concern across the UK and internationally in recent weeks about a rising tide of nurses and colleagues facing abuse at work.

Related articles

- [‘Harrowing’ video reveals abuse faced by Lanarkshire health staff](#)
- [‘Enough is enough’: Open letter calls for end to Covid-related abuse against health workers](#)
- [Union leader and NHS staff targeted with ‘vile abuse’ over Covid-19 vaccines](#)
- [Police investigating struck-off anti-vax nurse after likening NHS staff to Nazis](#)
- [Nursing leaders denounce Covid-19 deniers](#)
- [Second wave brings new reports of ‘awful’ abuse against nurses](#)
- [Nurses on coronavirus frontline facing ‘abhorrent’ abuse from public](#)

Related articles

'Enough is enough': Open letter calls for end to Covid-related abuse against health workers

4 August 2021

'Harrowing' video reveals abuse faced by Lanarkshire health staff

6 August 2021

Union leader and NHS staff targeted with 'vile abuse' over Covid-19 vaccines

2 August 2021

Police investigating struck-off anti-vax nurse after likening NHS staff to Hitler

26 July 2021

A 'super green' primary care clinic for shielding patients during Covid-19

9 August 2021

Proposal to give more nurses right to hand out overdose-reversal drugs

4 August 2021

