



# Measuring Aggressive Incidents in Medical Settings (AIMS)

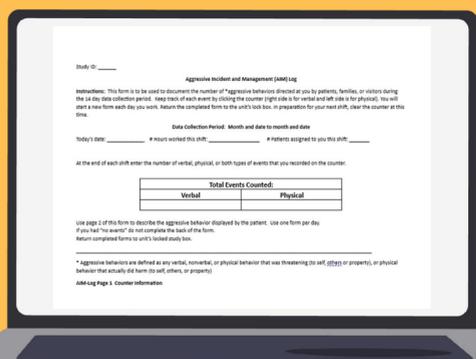
Workplace violence (WPV) is a significant and pervasive problem for healthcare workers and health systems. But rates of WPV are often represented by proxy measures such as rates of patient restraint, worker injury, and incident reports, which obscure the true exposure of individual workers to aggressive events.

A study featured in the March 2024 issue of *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety (JQPS)* aims to overcome this barrier by precisely measuring nurse and patient care assistant exposure rates to patient aggression, shedding light on prevention and management measures.



## THE STUDY

The Aggressive Incidents in Medical Settings (AIMS) research, a prospective, multisite cohort study, examined the incidence of patient and visitor aggressive events toward patient care staff on five inpatient medical units in a community hospital and an academic hospital setting in the northeastern United States using demographic forms, Aggressive Incident and Management Logs (AIM-Logs), and event counters over a 14-day data collection period.



### The study aimed to...

- ✓ Identify the **unit-level incidence rate** of patient and visitor verbal and physical aggressive behavior in inpatient medical settings.
- ✓ Identify the **incidence rate of patient care staff exposure** to patient and visitor verbal and physical aggressive behavior in inpatient medical settings.
- ✓ Describe the **characteristics of patient and visitor events** involving aggressive behavior toward patient care staff in inpatient medical settings and the effects of these events on staff.

## THE RESULTS

Participants recorded a total of **179 aggressive events**.

### EVENTS PER 20 PATIENT-DAYS

There were **2.54 aggressive events** per 20 patient-days.



**2.00**

verbal aggression



**0.85**

physical aggression

### EXPOSURE RATE PER 40 HOURS

The staff aggression exposure rate was **1.17 events** per 40 work hours.



**0.92**

verbal aggression



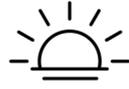
**0.39**

physical aggression

The most aggressive events occurred on the **day shift**.



**50.7%** day shift



**24.3%** evening shift



**25.0%** night shift



A significant difference in aggressive events was found based on the number of patients assigned, with a mean of **6.3 patients** when an aggressive event occurred vs. **5.7 patients** without an event.

The most common **precipitants** included:

medication administration **18.5%**

waiting for care **17.1%**

delivering food/drinks **15.8%**

Most events, **75.2%**, were managed with **verbal de-escalation**.



The AIMS study advances the measurement of workplace violence, as it provides both aggression incidence rates and worker aggression exposure rate calculations. The study found that aggressive events occur on a daily basis in most inpatient medical settings, suggesting that more attention be paid to the nature of those events and to management of patient aggression. Event counters and AIM-Logs can help by offering valuable information about patterns of aggression, shedding light on preventive interventions, and providing information on the need for debriefing and worker support after aggressive events.

To learn more about this study, visit:  
[https://www.jointcommissionjournal.com/article/S1553-7250\(23\)00288-X/abstract](https://www.jointcommissionjournal.com/article/S1553-7250(23)00288-X/abstract)