

# Horizontal bullying in nursing

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Why is horizontal bullying so prevalent in nursing, why is it so under reported and how severe are the impacts on nurses, new graduate nurses and patients?

## Introduction

Whilst many studies have been undertaken and recommendations have been made, horizontal bullying amongst nurses still occurs regularly, often goes unreported, and has the potential to cause a myriad of problems for nurses, their working environment, and the quality of patient care.



Figure 1 Retrieved from <https://www.infirmiers.com/etudiants-en-ifs/etudiants-en-ifs/le-poids-du-silence.html>

## Background

Unfortunately, it appears that horizontal bullying amongst the nursing profession, has been a significant problem for many nurses and has been occurring for many years. Horizontal bullying, is recognized as a serious issue at an international level and New Zealand is no different (Blackwood, Edwards, Catley, & Bentley, 2015). Even though this has been a well-known issue for many years and there has been extensive research carried out on it, as well as suggestions and resources that have been made to attempt to address the issue, this is clearly not working well and more still needs to be done. Alarming, horizontal bullying in the health sector, accounts for almost a quarter of all workplace bullying (di Martino, 2003).

## Implications

Horizontal bullying has been clearly linked to high staff turnover as well as nurses leaving the profession due to working in a negative environment, without sufficient support. Increased staff turnover, gives rise to a less than stable working environment and reduces effective teamwork, which is pivotal in providing optimal patient care (Becher & Vivosky, 2012). Given that nursing involves vulnerable patients who rely on the care that they receive to keep them well, and even alive, it is potentially dangerous for both patients and nurses, when the unprofessional behaviour of horizontal bullying occurs. It is widely recognised, that the detrimental effects of horizontal bullying on nurses, is quite likely to affect their ability to provide the best care to their patients. It even goes as far as to compromise patient safety (Becher et al., 2012).

## Recommendations

I believe that training institutes need to put some emphasis on teaching nursing students about the potential for horizontal bullying in their chosen career, as well as how to recognise what horizontal bullying is and what it isn't. I believe that providing a reasonably clear definition of horizontal bullying, will assist to empower student nurses to report incidents of horizontal bullying if they encounter them, which as mentioned above is part of the problem.

Providing new graduate nurses with personal resilience training on how they can best respond if faced with horizontal bullying, as well as the avenues available for support if needed, should give nurses some confidence and capability to constructively address the issue.

## References

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- di Martino, V. (2003). Steering Committee of the ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI Joint Programme on Workplace Violence in the Health Sector. Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/interpersonal/WVstresspaper.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/interpersonal/WVstresspaper.pdf)



## Rationale

One of my main reasons for choosing to use a poster as the medium to present my work, is that my review brought up complex issues which are very relevant and concerning in the current nursing workforce. However, concrete recommendations, were hard to ascertain and put into written words, due to the complex nature of my findings. I like the idea of doing a poster largely because it means that I will be able to further discuss my findings with people in person at any future presentations. I believe that this will enable me to provide more specific information on different aspects of my topic, and engage in interesting conversations with people, which can't be done so easily with a different medium (University of Florida, 2018).

I also have a personal preference for methods which are clear and succinct rather than wordy and long, therefore, I chose the medium that I would most prefer to see if I were the target audience.

<b>Pecot Category</b>	<b>Information relating to question</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Population</b>	Registered nurses and new graduate nurses working in hospital settings, and also patients.	Registered nurses have one of the highest rates of horizontal bullying / violence in the workforce. Particularly those working in hospitals.
<b>Exposure / Intervention</b>	Registered nurses exposed to horizontal bullying in hospital settings	I will be researching the impacts on both patients and nurses.
<b>Comparison / Control</b>	New graduate nurses in their first couple of years of nursing in a hospital setting.	Although horizontal bullying can affect nurses at all levels, I am interested in exploring the impact on new nurses who tend to be more vulnerable.
<b>Outcome</b>	To provide nurses with the appropriate education and tools for dealing with horizontal bullying in the workplace, should they encounter it.	Because horizontal bullying is such an issue for nurses, and the impacts are many, nurses need tools to support them to deal with it.
<b>Time</b>	NA	Time is not a factor in my literature review.

Whitehead, D. (2013). Identifying research ideas, questions, statement & hypotheses. Schneider, Z. M. In *Nursing and midwifery research: Methods and appraisal for evidence-based practice* (4th ed., pp. 57-76). Sydney, Australia: Mosby/Elsevier.

University of Florida. (2018). 7 Reasons Why you should present posters at a conference. Retrieved from <https://people.clas.ufl.edu/oppenhe/2014/06/09/7-reasons-why-you-should-present-posters-at-a-conference/>