

Unprofessional Behaviors in Healthcare

Study Results June 2009



Center for Patient and
Professional Advocacy
at Vanderbilt

StuderGroup[®]

Study Parameters

- ▶ Administered May – June 2009
- ▶ Voluntary participation of health care professionals solicited by blog and email invitation
- ▶ 1521 respondents
 - ▶ 84 % female
 - ▶ 16% male



Frequency of Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ 75% of survey participants stated they have been the target of unprofessional behaviors in past 24 months in their role as a healthcare provider (61% of males, 78% of females)
- ▶ 42% healthcare providers state that they are the target of unprofessional behavior on a daily, weekly or monthly basis



Initiator of Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ Nurses – 85%
- ▶ Physicians – 79%
- ▶ Manager – 54%
- ▶ Administrator – 43%



Reaction to Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ 85% stated they were frustrated
- ▶ 72% said they were angry
- ▶ 36% expressed distrust of leaders as a result of being a target of unprofessional behavior
- ▶ 68% have considered leaving their current job
- ▶ 41% have transferred from or left a previous job as a result of unprofessional behavior



Reaction to Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ 66% said the behavior had a moderate to great deal of effect on them short term – day it occurred to a week later
- ▶ 37% stated they still experienced effects of the behavior a week to several months after the incident



Addressing Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ 34% of respondents did not discuss the unprofessional behavior with the person
- ▶ 20% of those who did discuss the behavior stated it made this worse
- ▶ Only 12% found that it made the situation better



Reporting Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ 79% reported the incident to their supervisor or human resource department
- ▶ 44% of respondents stated that the person displaying the unprofessional behavior did not receive any consequences
- ▶ 49% say that the disruptive behavior continues to recur



Reasons for Not Reporting

- #1 - No accountability in place that would result in a positive outcome: 35%
- #2 - People cover for the person that engaged in unprofessional behavior: 20%
- #3 - Fear of putting career in jeopardy if alienate superiors: 18%
- #4 - Fear of being a 'whistleblower' only 6%



Managing Unprofessional Behavior

- ▶ 92% of healthcare professionals state they have had to manage unprofessional behavior reported to them
- ▶ 55% have received training on how to deal with unprofessional behavior
- ▶ 63% of respondents believe they need more training to effectively deal with unprofessional behavior



Organization's Policies

Does your organization have policies in place to deal with professional behaviors?

- ✔ 80% of respondents agree
- ✔ 28% state the policies are effective
- ✔ 20% state they are ineffective
- ✔ 52% find them to have variable effectiveness



Equitable Application of Policies

- ▶ 54% of respondents state that policies are **not** applied equitably amongst physician and non-physician professionals
- ▶ 48% do not agree that all members of an organization are held accountable for modeling desirable behaviors
- ▶ 46% said that leaders are not committed to addressing disruptive behaviors equitably, regardless of position
- ▶ 60% believe that unprofessional behaviors are ignored because of a professional's perceived high value



Barriers to Dealing with Unprofessional Behaviors

- #1 – Leaders don't act consistently: 69%
- #2 – Lack of training to deal with unprofessional behaviors: 48%
- #3 – Lack of policies to deal with unprofessional behaviors: 30%
- #4 – Lack of awareness of unprofessional behaviors: 30%



Addressing Unprofessional Behavior in the Work Place

- Conduct a GAP analysis of the organization's current policies and practices for dealing with unprofessional behavior. Align the analysis with the recommendations from the July 28, 2009 JCAHO Sentinel Event Alert – *Behaviors that undermine a culture of safety*
- Survey staff, leaders and physicians to assess their knowledge of and skills for handling unprofessional behaviors



Addressing Unprofessional Behavior in the Work Place

- ▶ Assess the organization's surveillance tools for reporting and addressing unprofessional behaviors
- ▶ Provide staff and physicians with skills training to recognize, report and handle unprofessional behaviors



- ▶ For more information about this study or to learn how Studer Group and Vanderbilt University Medical Center - Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy can work with your organization:

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