



Preventing Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA) in healthcare settings

OVA incidents are prevalent in healthcare

Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA) is when a person is abused, threatened or assaulted while working, or at the workplace.



OVA incidents are estimated to affect **95% of healthcare workers in Australia**.¹

It is a key hazard influencing mental and physical injury claims in Victorian health services.



"There's this whole entirety of clinical teams who will do anything for the person and for the visitor and for the patient's family that **puts them at risk of OVA** because the person's dying. So, **we absorb risk**. We explain away behaviour. And we don't report until the very end, until we're **extremely affected by the OVA**." - Health Service #5



What did ISCRR's research find?

ISCRR's 2023 Environmental Scan identified **interventions, risk controls and frameworks** that have been implemented and evaluated in **healthcare settings** to **prevent and manage OVA**.



Strategies for preventing and managing OVA

Garner support from executive leadership.



Increase resourcing and additional staff specifically for OVA incidents.

Improve environmental issues such as reducing loud noises.



Limitations

- More strategies focussed on OVA management rather than **prevention**
- Robust **evaluations are needed**.

Challenges in preventing OVA



- Under resourcing in OVA prevention
- Issues with **staff shortages**
- Staff culture that **normalises OVA**



- Under reporting of incidents
- Lack of **standardised guidelines** encompassing tailored training, including enhanced de-escalation techniques
- Legal **entitlements that confuse** health services.

1. Grant, S. L. et al. 2022. "Occupational violence and aggression in urgent and critical care in rural health service settings: A systematic review of mixed studies." *Health & Social Care in the Community* 30, no. 6: e3696.

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