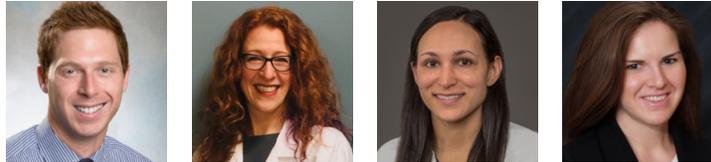


Promoting Staff and Patient Safety Through the Creation of an Emergency Department Patient and Visitor Code of Conduct

Jonathan D. Sonis, MD MHCM; Elizabeth S. Temin, MD; Andrea Blome, MD; and Kraftin E. Schreyer, MD CMQ FFAEM



While a simple document certainly does not solve the problem of workplace violence, a Patient and Visitor Code of Conduct serves several purposes...

Everyone who works in EM is proud to treat our patients, their visitors, and each other with respect and dignity.

Patient, Family and Visitor Code of Conduct

It is the responsibility of all patients, families and visitors in the MGH Emergency Department to speak and act in a respectful and safe manner.

Safety and Security

- Weapons are not allowed
- Photography and video/audio recording are not allowed without permission from a MGH healthcare provider

Unacceptable Behaviors

- Disruptive, offensive or otherwise inappropriate behaviors or language, including, but not limited to:
- Racial or cultural slurs, or other insulting remarks about race, language, religion, gender identity, or sexuality
 - Yelling or swearing
 - Making verbal threats or threatening gestures
 - Spitting or throwing objects
 - Any physical assault or attempted assault
 - Sexual remarks or behaviors

Code of Conduct Violations

- Our Emergency Department is under video and direct surveillance. Please report any concerns to our staff.
- **You may be asked to leave the Emergency Department if you cannot comply with this Code of Conduct, if you are not suffering from an emergency medical condition.**

Violence against emergency medicine (EM) providers has been increasing at an alarming rate. The CDC defines workplace violence as, "violent acts (including physical assaults and threats of assaults) directed toward persons at work or on duty."¹ The Joint Commission highlighted workplace violence as a particular concern for healthcare workers, especially those in emergency settings, in a Sentinel Event Report in 2018.² That

same year, an ACEP survey found that 69% of EM physicians reported an increase in workplace violence over the preceding five years, and that 38% of EM physicians reported having been victims of violence in the emergency department (ED) within the past year, which was a 10% increase compared to a similar survey done in 2005. The survey also found that 97% of the assailants were patients.³

Physical assaults and other behaviors like swearing, yelling, or using derogatory or threatening language that would never be accepted in any other workplace are often tolerated in the ED and treated as "business as usual." However, workplace violence negatively impacts the physical and mental wellness of providers and the care of all ED patients, by increasing emotional trauma, reducing staff productivity, and extending wait times.^{2,4} The emotional impact on staff leads to job dissatisfaction and fear, which in turn leads to increasing burnout and high turnover rates.^{2,5} Through disruption and interruption, workplace violence can additionally negatively impact quality and safety of care, by contributing to medical errors and adverse events. Furthermore, it likely contributes to increasing cost of care.⁶



While a simple document certainly does not solve the problem of workplace violence, **A PATIENT AND VISITOR CODE OF CONDUCT SERVES SEVERAL PURPOSES...**

It is imperative that ED leadership acknowledge and respond to this threat to the safety of their staff and workplace.⁷ While many EDs have responded to this increase in violence by increasing security, another tactic is to create Codes of Conduct for ED patients and visitors.⁸ These documents, which should be vetted by departmental, security, and legal leadership, as well as patient advocates, if available, can be posted throughout the ED and made available in laminated form to be presented to patients or visitors when warranted. It is important to note that Codes of Conduct do not supersede EMTALA.

While a simple document certainly does not solve the problem of workplace violence, a Patient and Visitor Code of Conduct serves several purposes, including:

- Reminding patients and family members that inappropriate behavior is unacceptable in the ED
- Comforting our patient population at large that the ED will not tolerate inappropriate behavior
- Empowering and protecting staff

Everyone who works in EM is proud to treat our patients, their visitors, and each other with respect and dignity. An ED Code of Conduct will remind all staff that the same should be expected from our patients and visitors. Pairing the Code of Conduct with a distilled, ED-specific Patient Bill of Rights can promote balance. Together, these documents can foster patient and visitor comfort and staff safety, furthering an environment in which optimal healing can occur. ●

PATIENT AND VISITOR CODE OF CONDUCT

The Episcopal Campus of Temple University desires to provide care for our patients which is free from negative influence and abusive behavior. We ask that all patients and visitors recognize and respect the rights of other patients, families, and staff.

To ensure a safe care environment, patients and visitors must adhere to the following behaviors:

- 1. No verbal or physical abuse**
- 2. No verbal or written threats**
- 3. No possession of weapons**
- 4. No use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, or illegal substances**
- 5. No still photography, video, or audio recording**
- 6. No tampering with or destroying equipment**
- 7. No more than 2 visitors per room**
- 8. Comply with requests by doctors and hospital staff**

 **EVERYONE WHO WORKS IN EM is proud to treat our patients, their visitors, and each other with respect and dignity.**

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