



Working together against workplace violence: HSA sponsors international conference

October 23, 2012

How do we work together against violence in health care workplaces? For the first time ever, the annual international conference to counter violence in the health sector is taking place in North America.

More than 470 participants from around the world have gathered at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Richmond to hear from experts and take part in workshops at the Violence in the Health Sector ... Linking Local Initiatives with Global Learning conference.

HSA President Reid Johnson said HSA is proud to be a sponsor of this event. -We hear from members every day about the violence they encounter at their worksites," he said. -Health care workers see more aggression and assaults than almost any other professional group, including law enforcement and border security," he said.

-Despite the efforts of our activists working in concert with colleagues, this is only getting worse ... and its aggravated by overcrowded, over-stressed, short-staffed hospitals and care centres."

In particular, Johnson noted the continuing issue of violence in mental health. -Just seven years ago, the health care community was shocked by the murder of one of our members. David Bland was a vocational rehabilitation counselor at Richmond Mental Health. He was murdered at his workplace by a former client," he said.

-His death galvanized the health sector around the need for more work to prevent violence. HSA set up the David Bland Memorial Award to recognize activists who champion local occupational health and safety issues.

-However, violence in mental health is a continuing ... and very acute ... problem. In the past few years, we have been working to assist registered psychiatric nurses who have been brutally beaten by clients.

-These violent incidents happen all over the province. With proper risk assessment and identification, and with the right care setting design, and by developing good patient communication and care plans, these incidents are preventable.

-One nurse experiencing violence is too many. For a nurse to be beaten in a preventable incident ... beaten until she is unconscious, beaten until she is so injured that she can no longer return to work and has to give up the rest of her career ... I have a visceral reaction to this.

-Working to prevent violence is one of the top priorities for our union. I know that HSA activists at this conference will learn about successful and creative ideas from around the world, and will help share experiences. This conference is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to learn how prevalent violence is for health care workers, and how we need to address the safety of health and social service professionals."

If you have health and safety concerns at your workplace, talk to your steward, or call HSAs office. Find your steward by [clicking here](#).

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