

How and Why?

Psych Facility Under Scrutiny – But Nothing Changes

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A Hospital Under Scrutiny

A 120-bed Massachusetts psychiatric hospital has been in the news lately.

Some background: This psych facility was visited by OSHA in May 2015 during an unannounced inspection.

From that inspection, OSHA's findings were significant enough to warrant a hazard alert letter. However, it was not until October 2015 – some five months after the surprise inspection - that OSHA issued that hazard alert letter to the facility.

The hazard alert “flagged the number of workers injured by violent patients and called for improved staffing and safety measures,” according to the Patriot Ledger of Quincy, Massachusetts.¹

According to the Ledger, this facility fails to arm its staff with panic buttons, and security staff is virtually nonexistent.²

¹ <http://www.patriotledger.com/article/20160302/NEWS/160226112>

² <http://www.patriotledger.com/article/20160302/NEWS/160226112>

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No panic buttons in a high-risk working environment, and security is virtually nonexistent.³

This particular facility is “a publicly traded company that operates more than 20,000 mental health beds across the U.S. and posted more than \$540 million in earnings in 2014, according to reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.”⁴

Ironically, this same hospital was previously cited by OSHA in 2007 for “high incidence of patient assaults on employees.”⁵

No Changes; and The Violence Continues

After reading and re-reading articles chronicled by Chris Burrell of the Patriot Ledger, I had difficulty grasping the entire scenario:

Documentation appears to support assertions of current and past safety breaches: patients being in harm’s way; medical and other staff assaulted; and safety staffing and precautions being sorely deficient.

Yet no action has been taken – save the issuance of delayed hazard alerts.

Alerts to which the facility is not required to respond.⁶

³ <http://sheilaw1943.blogspot.com/2016/03/a-visit-to-psych-facility-pembroke.html>

⁴ <http://www.patriotledger.com/article/20160303/NEWS/160307735/0/SEARCH/?Start=2>

⁵ <http://www.patriotledger.com/article/20160226/NEWS/160226698/0/>

⁶ <http://www.patriotledger.com/article/20160302/NEWS/160226112>

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And staff continue to be attacked.

How and why does this happen?

More recently, over the March 4th weekend, a nurse at this psych facility was assaulted by a patient, nearly tearing off an ear and almost gouging an eye.⁷

I cannot fathom how or why this is happening.

As a nurse with more 30 years behind me, imagining that the general consensus is ***it's okay to assault us*** is astonishing.

And worse: How do administrators regard the medical staff? Have we become so disposable that our well-being doesn't matter?

⁷ <http://www.patriotledger.com/article/20160307/NEWS/160306509>