



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

Workplace Harassment in Singapore Healthcare Sector

Adj Assoc Prof (Dr) Raymond Chua

Deputy Director of Medical Services
Health Regulation Group (HRG)
Ministry of Health, Singapore



An initiative of

FORWARD 

Workplace Harassment in Singapore Healthcare Sector

More healthcare workers in public institutions getting abused or harassed

Clinic assistants tell of abuse from patients, some GPs say they could be better protected



2 People queuing at the reception counter of a private clinic in a housing estate.



BY NABILAH AWANG

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Hurting the hands that heal: Cases of abuse, harassment of public healthcare workers on the rise



File photo of a hospital in Singapore

CNA Insider

'The lack of humanity eats away at you':
Frontline workers spill out bad encounters on the job

Unreasonable parents and abuse from patients are what security officers and nurses must deal with, but some things about the job may be worse, CNA Insider finds out in the podcast series Heavy Duty.



Neo Chai Chin

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Jalelah Abu Baker

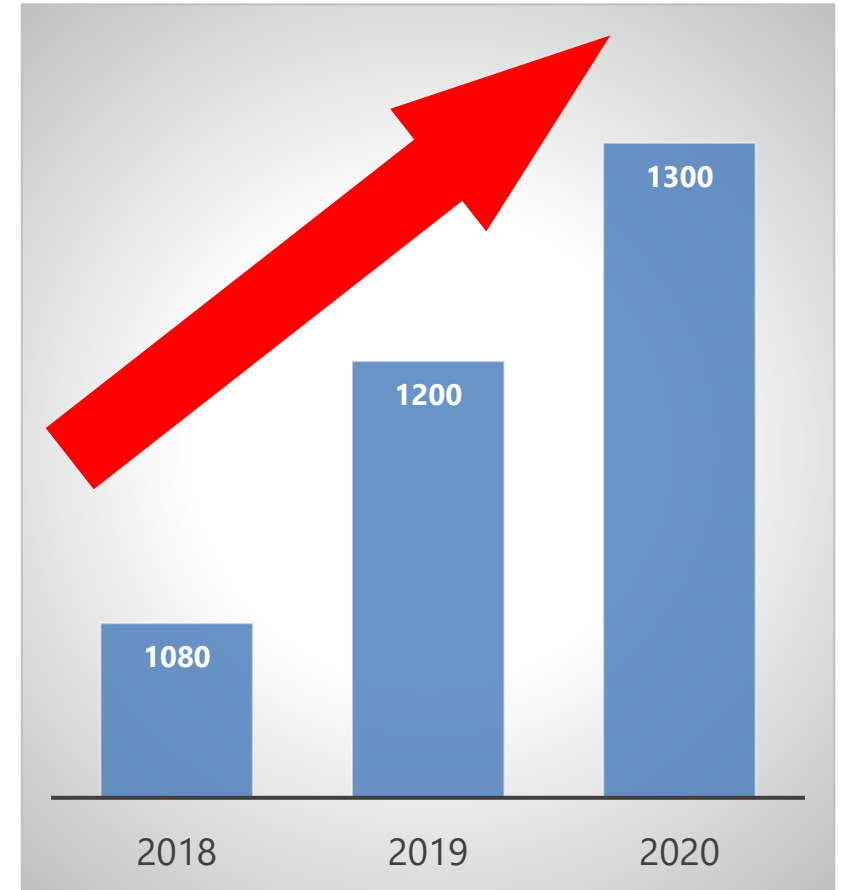
@jalelahCNA

23 Feb 2021 06:00AM
(Updated: 23 Feb 2021 10:34AM)



Workplace Harassment in Singapore Healthcare Sector

- ❑ Harassment cases in the healthcare sector are on the rise, up from 1080 in 2018, to approximately 1300 in 2020.
- ❑ Over the same period, cases reported to the police under the Protection of Harassment Act increased from 40 to 58.
- ❑ Could be an underrepresentation of number of cases
 - ❑ Healthcare workers may choose to exercise empathy and not take a legalistic approach to escalate after every altercation



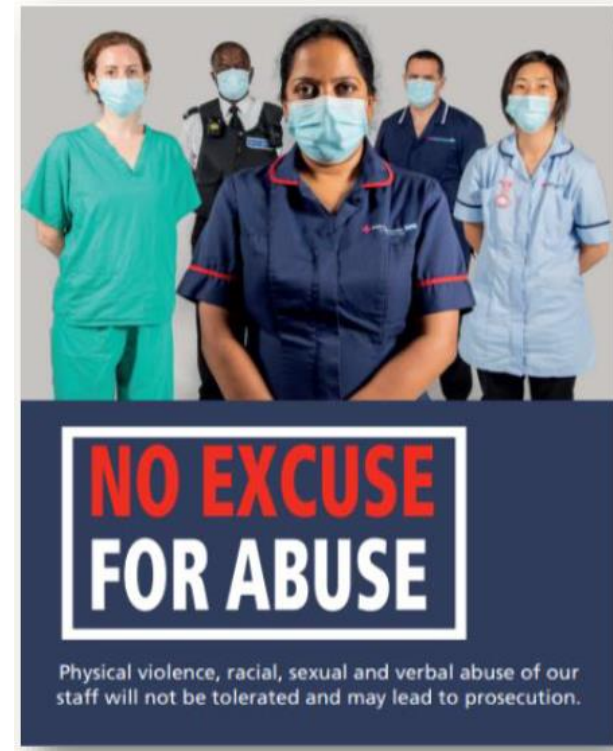
Protection from Harassment in Overseas Counterparts

Legislative Measures

- ❑ United Kingdom and New Zealand both enacted Acts (Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Harassment Act respectively) to protect citizens from harassment, e.g. stalking, verbal abuse etc.
- ❑ The Act gives both criminal and civil remedies

Other Measures

- ❑ Anti-abuse campaigns in UK and Australia



MOH's stance on Workplace Harassment

- ❑ MOH and our public healthcare institutions take a zero-tolerance approach towards abuse and harassment of our healthcare workers.
- ❑ Verbal or physical abuse of HCWs will not be tolerated and egregious offenders will be taken to task.



Safeguards and Efforts by MOH



Legislative Measures

- ❑ Enhancement of Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) in Nov 2014 accords additional protection for public healthcare workers that deliver essential services to the public
 - ❑ Liable to a fine of up to \$5,000, imprisonment for up to six months, or both.
- ❑ Victims may also obtain Protection Orders restraining their perpetrators or sue them for damages.
- ❑ Punishments are higher if the offence is directed at public sector workers in the course of their duties.

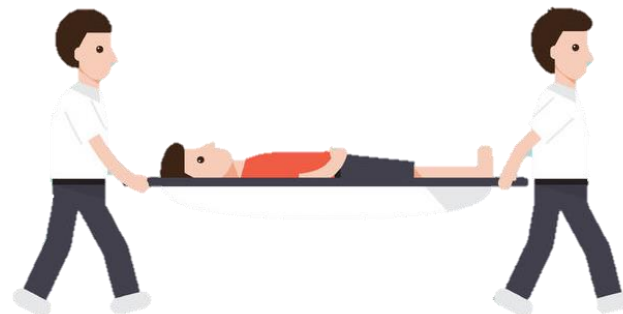


Safeguards and Efforts by MOH



Legislative Measures

- ❑ Some private sector healthcare workers are also given enhanced protection since they play a role in delivering public services.
- ❑ Paramedics providing private emergency ambulance services outsourced by SCDF
- ❑ Officers who provide step-down care with an approved provider in respect of the Medical and Elderly Care Endowment Schemes Act



Individual charged under POHA



- ❑ In March 2020, a 30-year-old man was charged under POHA for allegedly using threatening behaviour towards a doctor while seeking treatment at Ng Teng Fong General Hospital.

Five men to be charged with abusing, attacking public servants, doctor in separate cases



BY ASYRAF KAMIL

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Safeguards and Efforts by MOH

Other Measures

- ❑ MOH has established the Tripartite Workgroup for the Prevention of Abuse and Harassment of Healthcare Workers in April 2022.
- ❑ Consists of representatives from MOH, the Healthcare Services Employees' Union, public healthcare clusters, community care partners, and private healthcare providers
- ❑ The workgroup aims to spearhead a coordinated national effort to prevent abuse and harassment of healthcare workers in the public, private and community care sectors.



Efforts at Healthcare Institutions Level

- ❑ Assurance from employer that harassment will not be tolerated
- ❑ Adequate support by employer, e.g. robust SOP to manage abuse, training to handle difficult situations, peer support, counselling etc.

Visual cues (e.g. signs)
on treating healthcare
workers with respect

Activation of de-
escalation policies

Activation of security
officers/ police
intervention



Efforts at Healthcare Institutions Level

- ❑ Existing counselling hotlines and establishment of well-being offices in clusters to manage mental health concerns from staff
- ❑ Introduction of digital solutions to provide 24/7 mental health support, i.e. WYSA app





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Thank You



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