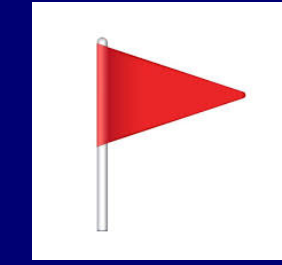


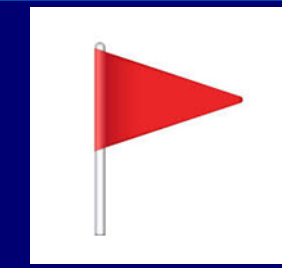
Background



- ❖ The population of patients that verbally or physically assault nurses is a small but significant group to the healthcare workers who care for them.
- ❖ Behavioral flag usage is recommended as part of a workplace violence (WPV) prevention program but has not been validated as evidence-based.
- ❖ The utility of behavioral flags in the electronic health record (EHR) has not been investigated in the emergency department (ED) specifically.
- ❖ The flags are intended to give nurses a warning that a patient has had previous violent incidents and gives individualized recommendations for providing safe care.
- ❖ Previous studies have demonstrated that ED RN's view behavioral flags favorably but bias in flag application is a real concern.

[View Behavior Concern](#)

Implications for Leadership

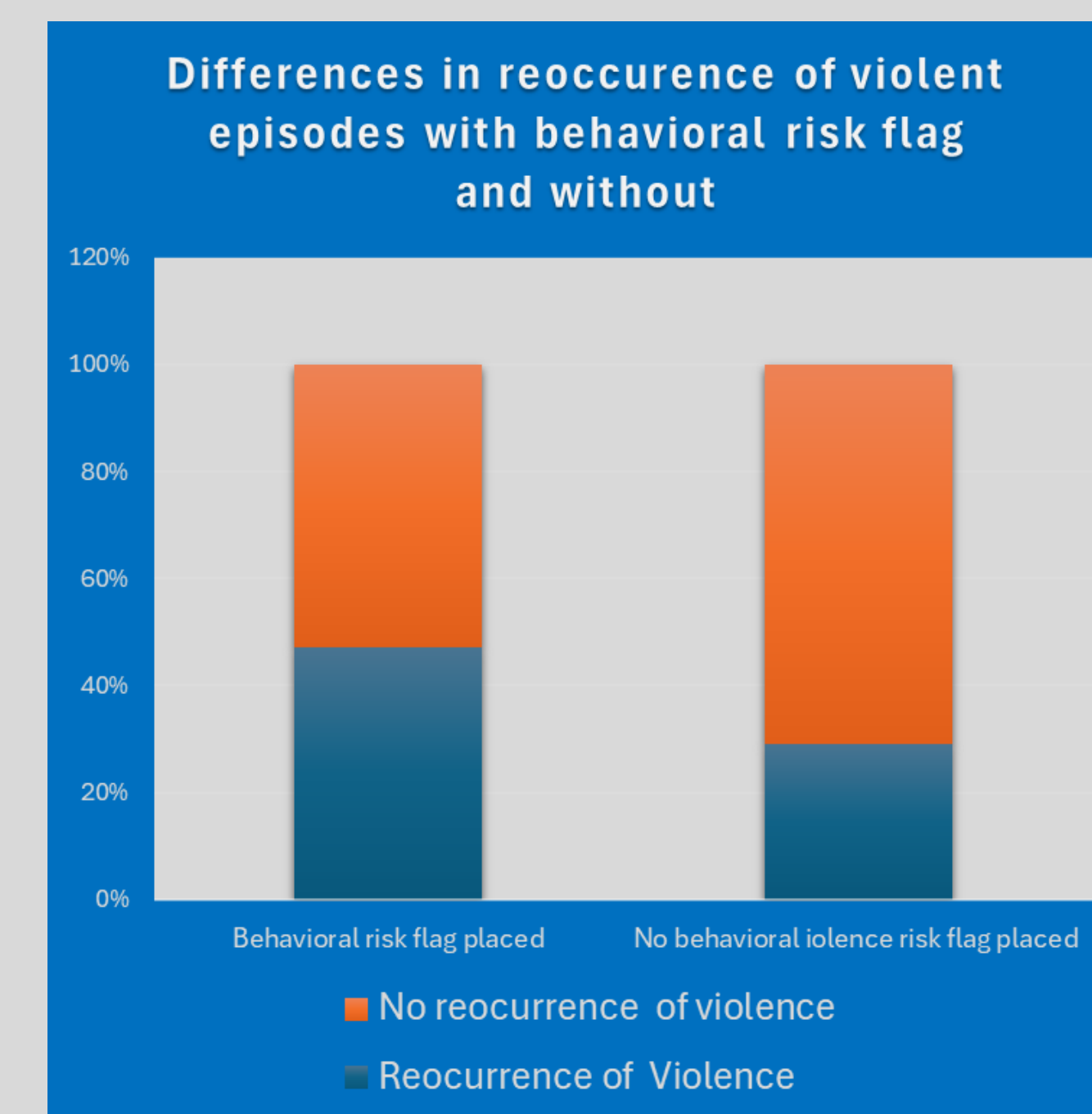


- ❖ Behavioral risk flags placed in the EHR after a verbal or physical assault may not prevent future incidents of violence from that patient in the ED setting.
- ❖ More investigation is needed to determine the definitive effectiveness of behavioral flags in the EHR and their ability to prevent future violence.
- ❖ A multifaceted approach involving education for staff, environmental modification, and interventions for patients and visitors is required to reduce WPV in the healthcare setting.

Methods

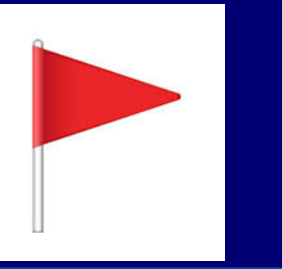
- ❖ A retrospective chart review was performed to compare the number of aggressive incidents from patients who had a behavioral flag applied after an aggressive incident and those with no flag applied.
- ❖ RN's from two community hospital ED's were surveyed on their attitudes toward the behavioral flags.

Outcomes



- ❖ Of the 65 patients who had flags placed, 47% had a documented reoccurrence of violence toward nursing or other clinical staff.
- ❖ Of the patients who did not have a flag placed in the EHR, 29% (N=25) had a documented recurrence of violence.
- ❖ The two groups were compared using a t-test with a resulting p value of 0.044 (using $p < 0.05$).
- ❖ Patients with behavioral flags applied after a workplace violence incident appear to be at increased risk of future violent events over the group of patients who did not have a flag applied.
- ❖ A survey of 25 ED nurses found that 96% of the nurses surveyed somewhat or strongly agreed that the behavioral flags help them to keep themselves and their coworkers safe.

Discussion



- ❖ In this small sample, behavioral flags did not demonstrate a reduction in the risk of future verbal or physical violence in the ED setting over patients who did not have a behavior flag placed after an initial aggressive incident.
- ❖ ED RN's overwhelmingly feel the flags are useful in their practice and feel the practice should continue.
- ❖ Given that recent studies show bias in behavioral flag application and reduced quality of care for flagged patients, the use of these flags in the EHR deserves a deeper discussion if their use continues to be a recommendation.
- ❖ Future research is needed to find evidence-based interventions that both protect healthcare workers — especially nurses in high-risk environments — from harm, and do not negatively affect patients.

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