

Enhancing Safety in Healthcare Settings: A Multi-modal Approach to Workplace Violence

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Background

- Workplace Violence (WPV) is a significant threat in healthcare, impacting both teammate safety and the quality of patient care.
- Effective mitigation requires a comprehensive approach that integrates behavioral assessment, innovative safety technologies, and a coordinated emergency response team including trauma-informed care specialists and public safety personnel.

Local Problem

- Advocate Christ Medical Center (ACMC) is a quaternary care and Level 1 Trauma center located on the southside of Chicago in Illinois.
- The Emergency Department evaluates approximately 76,000 patients annually.
- ED Leadership and the Workplace Violence Taskforce partnered to address rising WPV related injuries.
- Violence in EDs is a complex phenomenon requiring a multi-modal approach (McGuire et al., 2025).
- Long wait times and increasing numbers of admitted patients boarding in the ED contribute to patient agitation and escalation.
- Screening shows many weapons were always coming in- revealing potential violence to teammates and patients prior to detectors.

Methods

- Implemented a multi-modal safety strategy grounded in the STAMP framework.
- Augmented behavioral surveillance by installing a non-disruptive weapons detection system at the ED entrance.
- Enabled immediate access to emergency support through a mobile panic-alert badge system.
- Integrated real-time location tracking across devices to allow rapid identification of teammates, reduce response time, and improve safety outcomes.
- Provided a mobile panic alert for teammates to use outside of hospital if needed.

Results

- Large, measurable impact:** STAMP tool initiative (2024) elicited a 47% reduction in WPV events.
- High-volume prevention:** Weapons Detector in the ED (2025) resulted in 6,066 weapons confiscated or deterred from entering the hospital.
- Clear alignment with national safety priorities:** Substantial improvement and enhanced perception of safety for teammates, patients and visitors.
- Effectiveness of Safety Strategy:** observed changes in care delivery and outcomes: improved safety, enhanced situational awareness, more controlled environment, and strengthening of trust.
- Community and organizational impact:** reinforces public trust in the hospital by showing care of the community's well-being as dangerous items are removed before conflicts escalate.

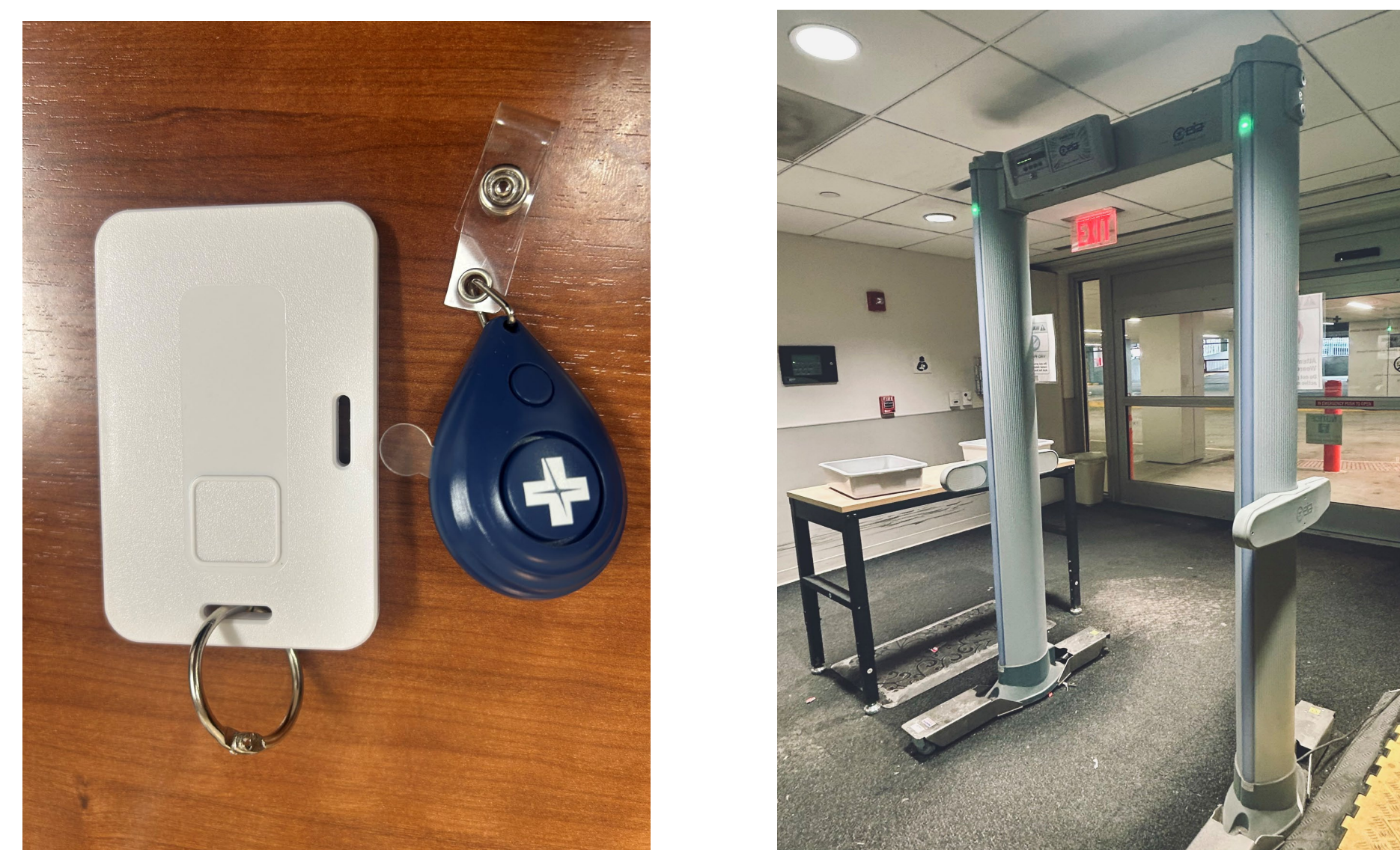


Figure 1. Mobile Duress badge, Mobile Panic Alert (left) and Weapons Detection machine (right).

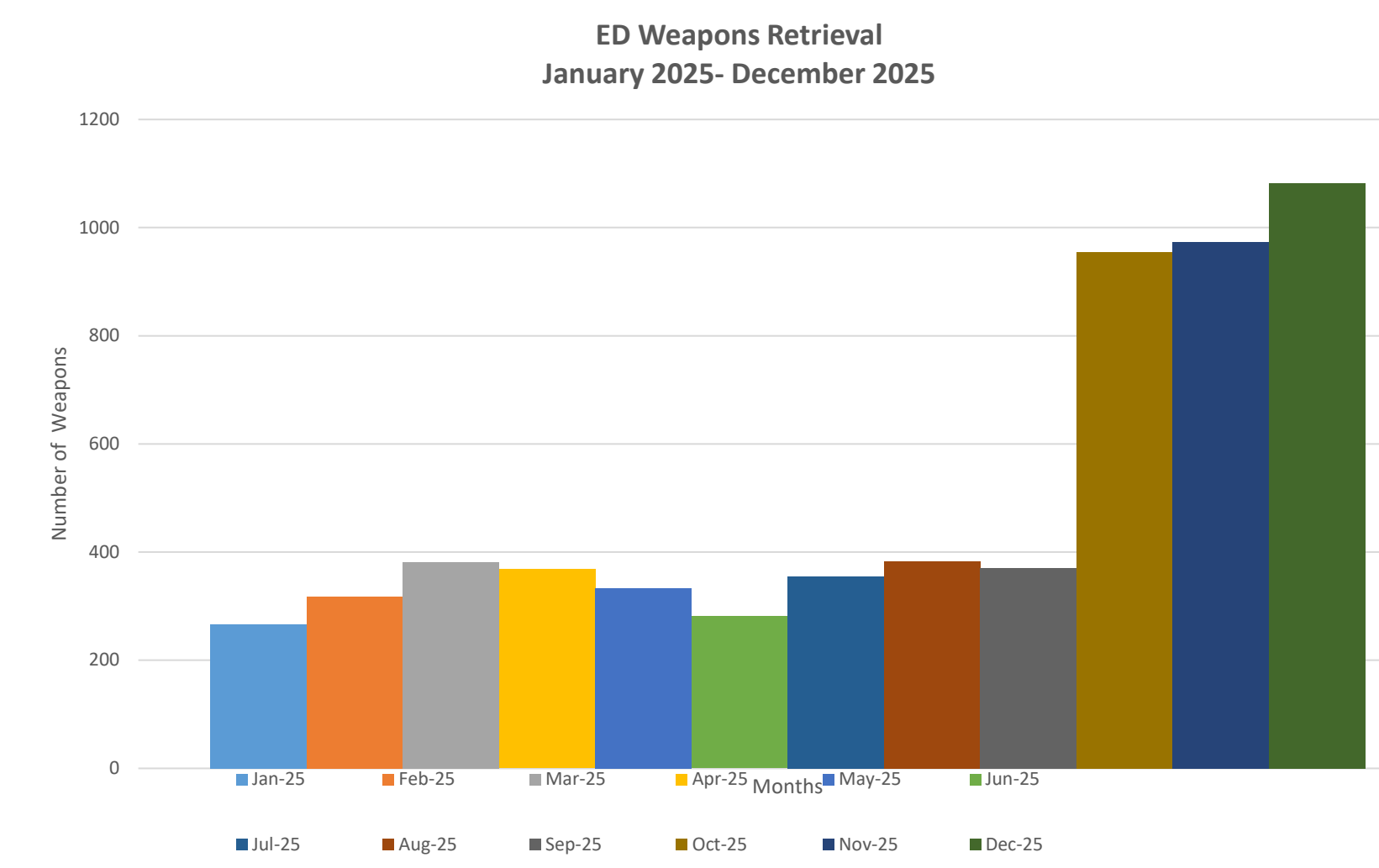


Figure 2. Weapons Retrieval by Month

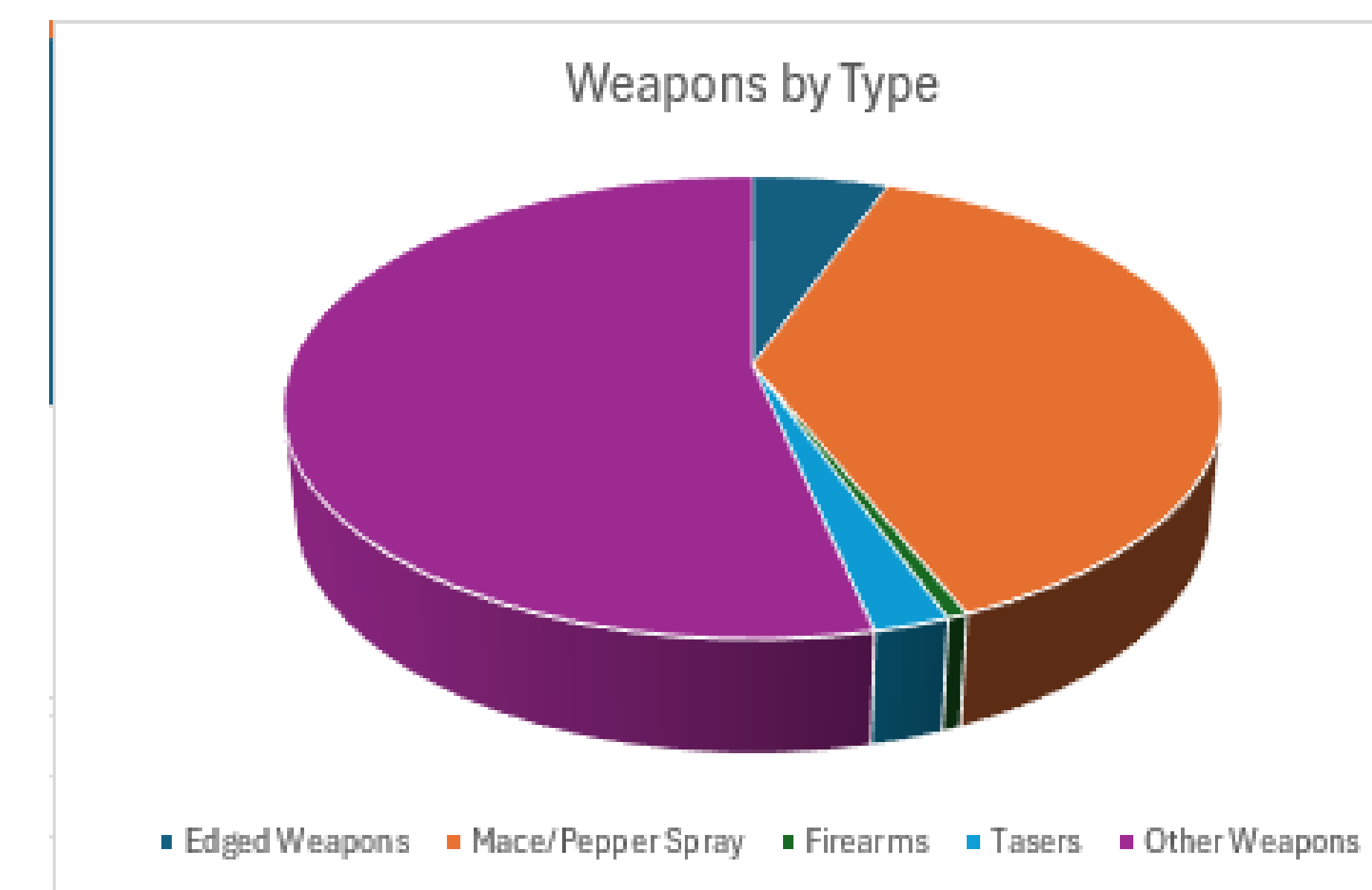


Figure 3. Weapons Confiscated by Type

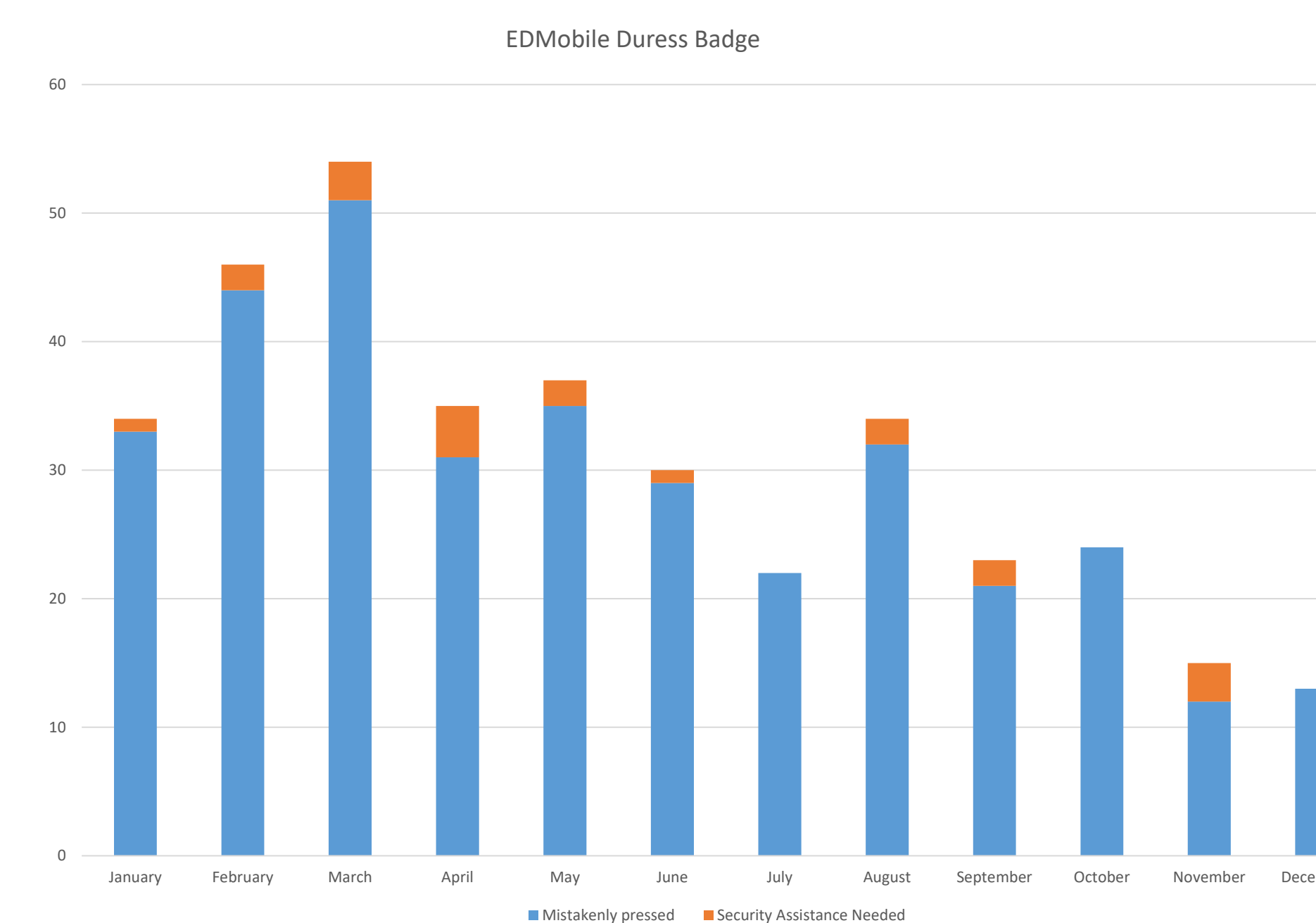


Figure 4. Lessons Learned: Mobile Duress Badge

Conclusions

- Weapons continue to enter healthcare settings at significant rates, underscoring the need for proactive safety measures.
- Implementing weapons detection at hospital entrances enhances the perceived safety of patients, visitors, and staff.
- Lessons learned:** Mobile duress badges are valuable tools; however, unintentional activations occurred more frequently than activations for true security needs, highlighting the importance of ongoing training.

Implications for Practice

- A multi-modal safety strategy strengthens physical security, promotes a culture of safety, enhances staff awareness, and empowerment.
- This approach provides an additional layer of protection for healthcare teams, patients, and family members.
- A multi-modal approach is adaptable and can be implemented across diverse healthcare settings.

References

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