HCiD as Violence to Physician in Korea

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Assaults toward physicians

Recently, there is a growing number of people who threat, assault or offend physicians while receiving medical treatment at medical institutions in Korea.

Patients and their family who are not satisfied with the treatment result visit medical institutions carrying a dangerous article. Such cases have been reported by mass media.
Cases

- A patient stabbed a psychiatrist in the abdomen at the psychiatric clinic office without reason.

- A man who were dissatisfied with his daughter’s deteriorating condition after she had been treated for nausea at a hospital. While believing that there was something wrong with the doctor’s prescription, he grabbed his daughter’s doctor by the collar and hit the face several times. The doctor sustained injuries that required over 4 weeks to recover, and had received psychiatric treatment.
Cases
On the way to the ER after running CT scans, a doctor got assaulted in the face and chest by a drunken patient in the elevator. The doctor got an injury in the eye and submitted his resignation over the incident after receiving psychiatric treatment.
A doctor proposed to change the medication that this patient had been taking to regulate his blood pressure. The patient refused and wielded a knife. The doctor got stabbed in the abdomen and had emergency surgery. KMA President Moo-Jin Choo visited the ward where this doctor was hospitalized.
Cases
Cases

- A man in his 20’s had been hospitalized to treat a heart disease for a month. During a daily ward round, this patient wielded a knife to threaten a doctor shouting that he didn’t like the doctor’s attitude. It turned out that the patient had a psychiatric problem.

- A patient who was waiting for his appointment kicked an orthopedist in the thighs and hit the face. The doctor was moving for an appointment with another patient.
Yearly trends of violence experience at doctor’s office

- 86.4% (Aug, 2010)
- 95.0% (Feb, 2013)
- 96.5% (Aug, 2015)

(2015. August 3 ~ 18, Surveyd by: KMA Newspaper, Respondents : 539 doctors)
Have you experienced violent acts, verbal abuse or threats from patients or their caregivers at hospitals including a doctor’s office?
- Yes 96.5%
- No 3.5%

How often have you experienced violent acts, verbal abuse or threats?
- 1–2 times a year 47.8%
- 3–5 times a year 26.2%
- 5–10 times a year 10.3%
- More than once a month 10.1%
- More than once a week 4.0%
- And almost every day 1.5%
Where is the location where such violent acts or verbal abuses take place?

- The doctor’s office: 64.6%
- ER: 22.2%
- Patients’ waiting room: 10.5%
- And other places including the elevator: 2.7%

What is the reason for patients and their caregivers to go violent or verbally abuse?

- Complaints about the medical treatment: 44.2%
- Unkindness of physicians and hospital employees: 7.4%
- Complaints about the waiting time: 14.5%
- Medical expenses: 8.9%
- No obvious reason: 14.1%
- And others: 10.9%
Do you feel that the level of violence has changed compared to the past?

- There is no big difference: 35.8%
- Violence and verbal abuses have become more serious than the past: 23.2%
- Violence and verbal abuses have become substantially serious than the past: 36.0%
- Violence and verbal abuses have became less serious than the past: 5.0%

What kind of influence have you experienced after the violence?

- Psychological instability including stress, feeling powerless, anger and fear: 91.4%
- Serious setbacks at work and in daily life such as absence at work and having medical treatment: 3.6%
- Not affected: 5.0%
How did the hospital react to the violence? (in case of an employed physician)

- The hospital actively handled the issue: 13.3%
- The hospital didn't show any interest and left it to the victim of violence: 26.4%
- The hospital wanted to handle it discreetly without raising a fuss, considering the reputation of the hospital: 60.2%

How did you react when you were the target of violence? Or how will you react?

- Report to the police: 38.4%
- Take actions with verbal or physical expressions: 19.3%
- Ignore and leave the scene: 30.6%
- Ask for help to others: 9.3%
- Others: 2.4%
Problems

- If a physician is assaulted while conducting medical practice at a medical institution, it would be impossible to provide quality care to patients and patients’ health and life could be threatened.

- Also, such violence can cause a loss of physicians, which can lead to a serious setback to provide medical service and even a vacuum of medical treatment.
Accordingly, the necessity strictly to regulate such violent acts against the physician when providing medical service has been highlighted.

Recently, Korean National Assembly passed a revised bill to ban any violent or threatening act against the physician giving medical service to create a stable medical treatment system and to protect the physician’s right for treatment and the patient’s right of health.
Anyone caught violating this law will be sentenced to a maximum of five years in prison or 20 million won in fines.

Korean Medical Association (KMA) has actively provided support to the legislation activities to pass the bill.
Prevention of violent acts against physicians is not just about protecting the medical professionals but also guaranteeing the continuity of the medical service to patients.

This is a matter that needs to be taken seriously since it sets up the minimum social safety net to protect the patient’s life and safety.
KMA Suggestions

- KMA will continue to create a safe environment to protect the physician from any kind of violent acts.

- We will protect the patient’s life and right of health by exerting our best efforts to provide the highest quality medical service to the public.
Thank you