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Violence against healthcare professionals: a rising threat to the health workforce and patient care

Violence against healthcare professionals is increasing at an alarming rate across Europe. On Sunday 12 March we mark the 4th European Awareness Day of Violence Against Doctors and other Healthcare Professionals to raise attention and catalyse action.

The World Health Organization [reports](#) that up to 38% of healthcare professionals suffer physical violence at some point in their careers, and many more are exposed to verbal and online abuse. Such aggression can have devastating consequences, including physical injuries, impacts on mental health, and in the most extreme cases even death.

Violence and abuse also coexist with burnout, a growing factor in professionals choosing to leave the health sector altogether. This interacts with unsafe working conditions, [health workforce](#) shortages and the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

CPME President Dr Christiaan Keijzer said “We need to recognise the impact of violence on healthcare professionals, which in the end affects not only the workforce but patient care. It is critical to promote a culture of respect for healthcare professionals, and provide resources to report and support incidences when violence occurs.

“The health workforce is already in crisis. We [call](#) for policymakers and the general public to help keep healthcare professionals safe. We also [urge](#) the European Commission to support governments by providing benchmarks for minimum workforce capacities and address healthcare professionals in the upcoming comprehensive approach to mental health.”

We are committed to continuing our work with European Medical Organisations and partners in the health community to raise awareness for this important topic.

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) represents national medical associations across Europe. We are committed to contributing the medical profession’s point of view to EU and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues.