



# Violence and Health Care Professionals

*Til Wykes*

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## **Violence and Health Care Professionals** Til Wykes

Til Wykes BACKGROUND The recent publication of several surveys on violence was the impetus for this book. The first was carried out in 1986 by the Health and Safety Commission Health Services Advisory Committee (1987). They conducted a comprehensive survey of the incidence of violence to 5000 workers in five separate health districts. The results from the 3000 people who eventually replied made many in the caring professions worried. One in 200 workers had suffered a major injury following a violent attack during the previous year and a further one in ten needed first aid following an assault. Other surveys also showed high risks: of social service staff, 6% had suffered an attack in the past 5 years (Saunders, 1987), and social workers were at even higher risk. 29% had been assaulted in the last 3 years (Rowett, 1986). In addition, 4% of general practitioners had experienced an attack resulting in injury in the past year (D'Urso and Hobbs, 1989). Clinical psychologists were also at risk - 53% had been assaulted at least once during their professional career and 18% in the past year (Perkins, 1991). Media reports of extreme violence seem to be the tip of the iceberg. Many staff are attacked and some of these attacks have serious physical or psychological consequences that interfere with the victim's ability to return to their full working capacity. This loss of highly trained staff should be recognized by employers and the community.

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