Aggression and Violence Against Primary Care Physicians—a Nationwide Questionnaire Survey.

Abstract:
International studies show that aggressive behavior against primary care physicians is not an uncommon occurrence. There has been no systematic study to date of the nature and frequency of such occurrences in Germany. A four-page questionnaire was sent to a nationwide random sample of 1500 primary care physicians. It contained questions about the type, frequency, severity, and site of aggressive behavior against the physician. 831 (59%) of 1408 correctly delivered questionnaires could be included in the analysis. 91% of the respondents (95% confidence interval [CI], 89%-93%) said they had been the object of aggressive behavior at some time in their career as a primary care physician, 73% (95% CI, 70%-76%) in the previous 12 months. Severe aggression or violence had been experienced by 23% (95% CI, 20%-25%) in their entire career and 11% (95% CI, 8%-13%) in the previous year. The vast majority of respondents said they felt safe in their offices. 66% of female and 34% of male respondents said they did not feel safe making house visits while on on-call duty. The frequency and extent of aggression and violence against primary care physicians in Germany is comparable to those reported by international studies. Strategies for dealing with this problem should be developed. In particular, the issue of safety on emergency call needs to be addressed.