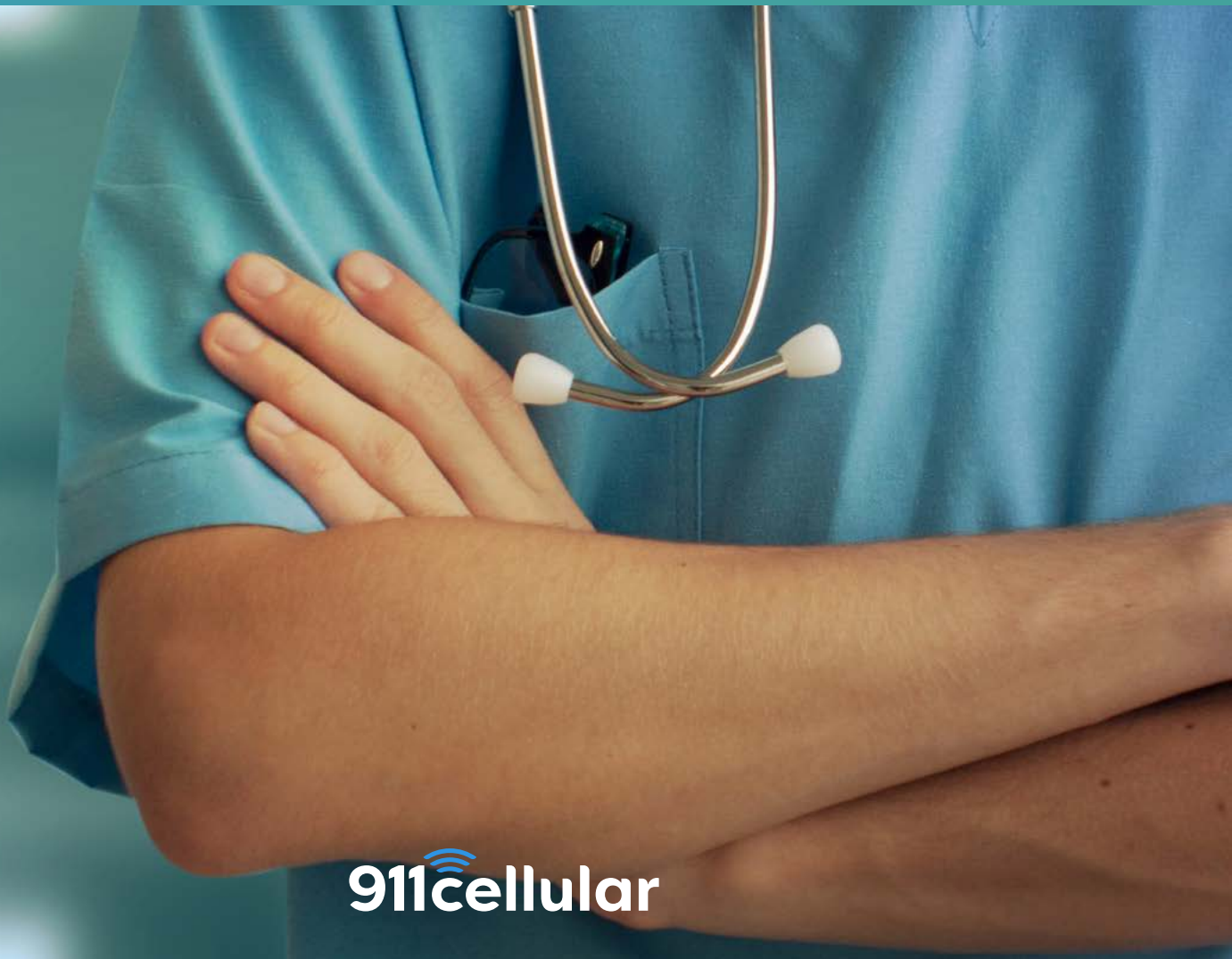# The Critical
CO$T
of VIOLENCE
in HEALTHCARE

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A long and frustrating battle

Violence against healthcare workers has been an issue for many years now. Statistics show that incidents of serious workplace violence (those requiring days off for the injured worker to recuperate) were four times more common in healthcare than in private industry between 2002 and 2013, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Also, healthcare workers suffer 50% of all workplace violence assaults, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Despite growing awareness of the issue, these daunting trends continue at many hospitals across the nation. Before getting into the solutions that can help in decreasing violence, we must first understand exactly what is happening at the ground level and what costs are incurred.

The truth in numbers

The cost of workplace violence within healthcare is staggering; **it's estimated that US hospitals spend a whopping $428.5 million each year as a result of workplace violence**. Common cost categories are:

- ▶ Staff turnover ($234.2 million)
- ▶ Medical care and indemnity (compensation for lost wages made to employees who were injured on the job - $49.9 million)
- ▶ Disability and absenteeism ($90.7 million)

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To see how these numbers apply to your facility, consider the following data provided by the Center for Disease Control; in 2015 the CDC reported an incidence rate for workplace violence of 4.9 incidents per 10,000 worker months for healthcare workers. **This translates to 58.8 incidents annually per 10,000 workers.**

Additionally, the report went into even more details and identified that **these injuries resulted in average medical costs of $2,631 per injury, with an additional $508 in indemnity costs ($3,139 per incident)**.

58.8	**$2,631**	**$3,139**
annual incidents per 10,000 workers	average medical costs per injury	average total cost per incident

Are panic buttons the solution?

Deena Brecher, MSN, RN, APN, ACNS-BC, CEN, CPEN, president of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) had this to say about panic buttons in healthcare:

> *"There's only one environmental control measure that we found that actually makes a difference in the amount of violence in a department, and that is a panic button or silent alarm."*

These powerful words come directly from the battlefield in the fight against healthcare violence. Let's take a look now at the benefits of a thoroughly deployed, enterprise-level panic button system.

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Reduces the number of incidents

Patients are less likely to act aggressively when they know staff have the means to quickly alert security.

After launching a panic button system (and posting informational signs about it), an emergency room in Atlanta saw a ~**21% reduction in the number of code silver incidents** (aggressive / combative patients).

Reduces the severity of incidents

Panic buttons help first responders reach the person in need faster, which often helps to de-escalate violent situations and ultimately reduce the severity of the potential harm done. This reduced injury rate can lower your company's liability and reduce the cost of injury payouts.

Faster intervention leads to an overall reduction in the severity of incidents, which directly impacts an enterprise's bottom line.

After launching enterprise-wide panic buttons, a healthcare system in California experienced a ~**35% reduction in the number of incidents that required treatment and time off compared to the previous 12 month period**. Based on the data compiled by OSHA, a 30% reduction in incidents of this nature can result in a cost savings of over $55,000 annually (per 10,000 workers).

Increases staff satisfaction

In a recent poll, caregivers in the Behavioral Health department of a clinic in Ohio indicated that they felt safer and were more satisfied within the workplace because the system rolled out a panic button program the previous month. Increased satisfaction is correlated with lower turnover rates, which reduces another major cost in the fight against healthcare violence.

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Protects reputation

Impossible to calculate, this is perhaps the biggest cost associated with workplace violence. Healthcare systems have long traditions of excellence that the community and philanthropic members rely on. Ensuring that those who protect our communities are protected themselves is critical toward ensuring a bright future for your organization.

Panic button returns

Healthcare security professionals must work to deploy systems that provide the greatest positive impact within the budgets assigned. In order to do this, there must be an open and honest dialogue about the value of each possible solution. In the case of panic buttons, the data suggests a **hard cost savings of about $119,000 per 10,000 workers** for systems that deploy panic buttons widely. Thus, if you can deploy a panic button system for this cost or less, you will benefit from the hard cost savings alone, and really benefit by also saving on the soft costs.

About the Author

Chad Salahshour founded 911Cellular after a lifetime of dedicated service as a law enforcement officer which began over three decades ago. Chad entered law enforcement in response to the 1988 terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which killed his neice along with 258 passengers and crew members. Since that day, Chad took an oath to protect and serve others which continues to this day as his company develops lifesaving panic button solutions.

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