Incivility, bullying and workplace violence are increasing at epidemic rates within healthcare. Incivility, bullying, and workplace violence represent a continuum of behaviors that begins with incivility and can progress to incidences of workplace violence.

Dysfunctional communication methods are not new behaviors in nursing but based in the traditional patriarchal and hierarchical gender-based servant nature of nursing as a task-oriented profession.

A continuing education model was developed that provided nurses with professional communication techniques to overcome DCM in the workplace. Initial results indicate that these methods were effective and that nurses would use them when confronting DCM.

The pilot study revealed that the communication tools introduced were efficacious and would be utilized by participants for dealing with DCM in the workplace (N=5; 100%).

Short term results indicated that the methods and tools utilized to address DCM were effective and useful for nurses.

Future research should be conducted to determine if professional communication methods and educational courses about DCM will decrease the rates of DCM experienced in the workplace.

Limitations of the pilot study were small sample size (N=5) and a short data collection window (1 month).

The primary targets of DCM are nurses in all roles and at all ranks including nursing students and nursing faculty. New inexperienced nurses are most likely to become targets of DCM.

The primary perpetrators of DCM are experienced nurses in a position of power or authority.

Other perpetrators include physicians and administrators.

The main reasons behind DCM in the workplace stem from the traditional patriarchal system that placed nurses in the role of a task-performing servant to those with more authority, and increased competition in the workplace.

Why should nurses care about DCM?

All forms of DCMs result in injury to the victim, whether that injury is psychological or physical harm. Dysfunctional communication methods also result in organizational costs that can affect patient safety.