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Management of Security in General Hospitals in South Western Uganda

Security is one of the support services that are responsible for ensuring a safe environment of care in health care settings in Uganda. Management of security is known to vary from one organisation to another including hospitals. It was against this background that the study set out to focus on management of security in general hospitals in south western Uganda in six hospitals of Itojo, Kambuga, Kisoro, Nyakibale, Mutolere and Rugarama. The study was intended to explore the management of security in general hospitals in order to enable hospital managers design better security management strategies. This required emphasis on the following research question: are general hospitals in south western Uganda capable of managing health care security? However, attending to this question required the researcher to; determine the security concerns experienced by general hospitals; explore security in-puts put in place to manage security; analyse the effectiveness of security processes available and determining security related challenges which they face. This was a descriptive and cross-sectional study employing quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The methodology involved application of pretested interviewer administered questionnaires and key informant guides that were administered to 33 security personnel selected by census and 18 key informants selected purposively basing on their level of expertise. An observation check list among others was used to assess the effectiveness of security processes basing on the compliance of general hospitals to meet the established security standards. A census of six hospitals equally distributed among PNFP and Government were studied. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 and results presented using tables and text while qualitative data were categorised into themes, analysed and presented in descriptive form. 33

Results indicated that theft, assaults, workplace violence and elopement were among common security concerns in general hospitals and all the security personnel were males in the age bracket of 30-39 years. The chances of security concerns happening in general hospitals were generally low with poor preparedness to handle them in case they occurred. Nearly all the hospitals were non-compliant with the criteria to meet the established security standards with only two out of six hospitals fairly meeting the security standards. However, gaps including lack of security guidelines, security plan, security committees, and non-availability of training opportunities for security personnel were identified. Inadequate funding and the fact that some hospitals are located near the borders with insecure countries were some of the challenges reported to affect the performance of most hospital administrators and DPCs. General Hospitals in south western Uganda lack the capacity in terms of security infrastructure and the general ability to manage health care security. The compliance for meeting established security standards was below threshold that was designated for fully meeting the standards. It is, therefore, recommended for hospital managers and other policy makers including the DPCs, those in Ministry of Health and other healthcare related organisations to work together and close the security gaps existing in general hospitals in order to improve on the management of security in general hospitals in the south western region and the whole country at large.

Key Words: Management, Security, General Hospitals, South Western Uganda.