

**ORIGINAL PAPER**

**Critical Cases Faced by Mental Health Nurses and Assistant Nurses in Psychiatric Hospitals in Greece**

**Evmorfia Koukia, RN, PhD**

Assistant Professor in Psychiatric Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece

**Sofia Zyga, RN, PhD**

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Human Movement and Quality of Life Sciences, Department of Nursing, University of Peloponnese, Sparta, Greece

**Correspondence:** Evmorfia Koukia, Assistant Professor, Zografou Community Mental Health Center 42 Davaki-Pindou Str, Zografou 157-73 Athens, Greece  
e-mail: ekoukia@nurs.uoa.gr

Abstract

Background: Psychiatric Nurses and nurses' assistants working in an inpatient unit experience a significant number of critical cases. A small number of studies have explored which patients' problems nurses perceive as 'critical case or incident' and particularly which interventions they choose.

Aim: The aim of the research was 1. To identify the clinical problems that mental health nurses and assistant nurses characterize as critical 2. To report the main nursing interventions 3. To investigate the main person involved in the critical incident.

Material-Method: Critical incident technique was used as a method of data collection. Content analysis was carried out in order nurses' information to be categorized into subcategories. The sample consisted of 35 mental health nurses and nurses' assistants who work in psychiatric acute inpatient wards.

Results: Nurses identified ten types of critical incidents. They noted violence (verbal, physical) by patients and psychotic symptoms to be the most critical situations. Nurses were the main person involved in these incidents. The study also described eight nursing interventions used by nurses when faced with critical events.

Conclusions: The findings indicated that mental health nurses and assistant nurses working in acute inpatient wards are called to confront a variety of critical incidents in their every day practice. Further research is necessary to identify in-depth nursing interventions and decision-making used in these situations.

**Key words:** Mental health nursing, critical incidents, nursing interventions