
CANADIAN SECURITY

Gun violence in hospitals tough to predict: expert

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News

Health Care

When it comes to gun violence in hospitals and health-care facilities, Martin Green, president of the International Association for Healthcare Safety and Security (IAHSS), says it is difficult to prevent.

“There’s a greater chance of it taking place in other countries and less likely in Canada, but we’re not going to be exempt from it,” he elaborates.

According to The Canadian Press, a shooting recently occurred at the Northumberland Hills hospital in Cobourg, Ont. that led to the deaths of an elderly married couple. The 70-year-old man and 76-year-old woman had been admitted to the hospital for unknown reasons.

CP says Cobourg Police were alerted to shots fired in the hospital’s emergency room, and when they arrived, discovered the woman had a fatal head wound from a gun. The Special Investigations Unit  the man and then shot

him.

Such an event highlights the difficulties hospitals and other health-care facilities face in preventing and responding to gun violence.

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“It’s a tragic event, there’s no question about that,” Green says in response to the shooting. “It’s unfortunate that this is not the first time that something like this has happened, and it’s not the last time that something like this will happen.”

“Unless Canadian hospitals, and hospitals in other parts of the world, are prepared to go through airport style screening to gain entry into a hospital, I don’t know that there’s anything that we can do about [gun violence],” he adds.

While some hospitals use metal detectors in isolated situations, this is a rarity, and depends upon a hospital’s staffing levels, financing and geographical location, among other factors. For example, the Hôtel Dieu-Grace Healthcare in Windsor, Ont. implemented metal detectors in the mental health unit following a stabbing.

But Green says it is unlikely that hospitals would install metal detectors at all entrances, and, in the case of the Northumberland Hills hospital shooting, wonders whether an elderly couple would have been put through metal detectors.



When asked what steps hospitals can take to ensure public safety and security, he suggested training and vigilance for personnel who work in emergency departments and mental health facilities.

“A hospital needs to evaluate its security program based on known risks and potential risks,” he adds. “They need to do a threat-risk assessment, they need to look at what steps they could take to reduce an incident like this from taking place, and, more importantly, how to respond when something like this does happen.”

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