To whom it may concern: January 26, 2015

       I was brutally assaulted by a patient while I was at work. I was the triage nurse that day and it was nearly the end of my shift. This patient- a 24-year-old woman, had signed in for an abdominal complaint. She was well known to our department for multiple visits and assaultive and threatening behavior. This day, she did need to wait and others went before her. She eventually made her way back to the triage/intake room, uninvited with the younger of her two children. When I asked her to leave, she sprang from her chair and proceeded to beat me until my co-workers bodily removed her. I suffered a fractured proximal humerus and facial contusions. Additionally, my soul was deeply battered.

       The Portland police officer that took my report apologized saying the most he could charge her with was a misdemeanor. She broke my arm with her hands out of anger! A misdemeanor?!!! The charge was eventually changed to a felony by a grand jury after it was learned that both her children were in the room during the assault. She has since plead guilty and soon will be sentenced, hopefully to prison.

       This sort of assault against a health care provider should not be tolerated or dismissed, ever. Nor should it be a misdemeanor, ever. These assaults against professionals should be felonies, just like it is for police, fire fighters, paramedics and bus drivers. As healthcare providers we put ourselves in harms way often. Because of laws in place to ensure patients access to care, we do not have the ability to refuse service to abusive individuals. We need protection in our workplace and legislation in our state.

Thank you,

Barb Ward, RN