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Effective Writing

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Rhetorical Analysis of Health Care Violence

On September 22, 2010, *The Baltimore Sun* printed an article about a dangerous epidemic that has been infecting our health care system for years. Authors Kathleen M. McPhaul and Jane Lipscomb show a side of health care that many of us either are not aware of or ignore. They show their audience, predominately Maryland readers, the dangers that health care professionals face while on the job. They explain that the Johns Hopkins shooting on September 16 was just a small glimpse into the growing epidemic of violence. Most of the health care providers in today's system experience some form of violence on the job. This article is important because the authors urge the public to demand "stronger regulations in order to keep the health care workers, patients, and visitors safe in Maryland's health facilities" (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). McPhaul and Lipscomb express their opinion by using emotion, credibility, and logic in order to persuade their readers. By using Aristotle's proofs and avoiding damaging fallacies, McPhaul and Lipscomb have written an article that effectively articulates their point and makes the reader consider their opinion.

McPhaul and Lipscomb use emotion in order to draw their reader in and help to convey their opinion in a way that their audience will understand. By opening the article with the Johns Hopkins shooting, they are able to spark their readers' interest. The Johns

Hopkins shooting evokes a great deal of sadness and anger, in Maryland natives, while commanding the audience's attention. This fires up the audience to read what they have to say about such a horrible event. The central quote in the design of the article also works in the same way the introduction does, it grabs the reader's attention in an emotional way. The central quote, "Workplace violence is an invisible but deadly epidemic for health care workers around the world" evokes uncertainty in most people, and fear in people that are or know someone that works in health care (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). Throughout the article, the try to appeal to the readers' emotions by providing them with first hand accounts of a nurse that was assaulted on the job and statistics about the number of health care workers hurt. These examples appeal to the reader's emotions because people become sensitive when hearing other people being subjected to violence. The authors use emotion through quotes as well. An example of this is, "what the public does not understand is that hospitals are also dangerous places for employees and that those unsafe working conditions, in turn, endanger patients" (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). Once the audience reads this quote, they become fearful for themselves and aware that if they do not try to fix this problem, they may become a victim of such violence. By using emotion to connect with the audience the authors are appealing to the readers need to help other people. Because the authors do not directly state emotions their article does not overwhelm or force the reader to feel a certain way about the topic.

The credibility of both the authors is an important aspect needed in order for them to persuade their audience. McPhaul is an assistant professor and the director of the Community/Public Health Research Center at the University of Maryland School of Nursing (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). Lipscomb is also a professor and director for the Work Health

Research Center (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). Because both of these women are well educated in the field they are discussing, they are considered to be credible sources. When the reader sees that they are credible, they are more likely to be open to what they have to say, and may even agree with them because of their knowledge on the subject. The reader is more likely to agree with the authors because they are more likely to trust the opinion of an expert on the topic, rather than someone who is not qualified.

McPhaul and Lipscomb incorporate facts throughout their article in order to help the reader fully understand the topic. They provide important statistics, for example “hospital staff experiencing verbal and physical violence each year ranges from 30 percent to 100 percent” (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). By using logic throughout their article, the authors effectively explain their argument for regulating medical workplaces to decrease violence. The authors explain that most of the violence that health workers experience comes from being punched, scratched, pushed, or choked (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). Not only do they explain what they are trying to regulate, but also they give ideas as how to stop the violence. McPhaul and Lipscomb recommend that the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MOSH) increase their safety regulations in hospitals. They suggest that MOSH instate “clear hospital policies, a thorough risk assessment, adequate staffing and security resources, employee training and ongoing recordkeeping and monitoring” (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). In their article, McPhaul and Lipscomb use two types of logical reasoning: inductive and deductive. Both these forms of reasoning help to appeal to the reader and keep them engaged in the article.

The authors use deductive reasoning in order to capture and sustain their audience’s attention. For example the authors state that, “Patient safety and staff safety are

linked. If your nurse, physician, or patient care technician is not safe, neither are you or your loved ones” (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). The reader’s are able to see that this is deductive reasoning, by using the criteria described in the Perdue Online Writing Lab. Authors Stacy Weida and Karl Stolley explain that deductive reasoning as beginning “with a generalization and then applies it to a specific case” (“Using” par. 4). Normally deductive reasoning is categorized into three separate parts: major premise, minor premise, and conclusion. Because this statement is missing a premise it is considered an enthymeme. The minor premise in the statement is, “patient safety and staff safety are linked”. The conclusion in the statement is “if your nurse, physician, or patient care technician is not safe, neither are you or your loved ones.” Therefore, the major premise in the statement is missing. By analyzing the deductive reasoning, the reader is able to clearly follow the authors.

McPhaul and Lipscomb are trained writers; because of this they avoid the use of fallacies. In some cases, enthymemes are fallacies because of their missing premise; however, McPhaul and Lipscomb avoid making their enthymeme a fallacy by not using deduction in an unethical manner. They only state facts in their enthymeme and do not try to use those facts to push their own agenda, which makes it helpful instead of harmful. When people that do not understand the use of rhetoric read excerpts such as “Other states have [regulated the workforce], including California, Washington, New York and New jersey” they might consider this a bandwagon fallacy (McPhaul and Lipscomb 19). The audience may see this as a bandwagon fallacy at first because it suggests that we should regulate the workplace, as it has been popular in those states. They are able to realize it is not a fallacy because the authors are not suggesting regulations because other states are

doing them, but because they will be effective in maintaining the safety of the health care professionals.

Overall, the article was very effective. The authors stated the reason for their article and gave credible helpful information in order to back up their position. The article not only show the horrible violence that the health care system has fallen victim to; but, it also gives the reader suggestions on how to change something horrible occurring in their own city. The fact that McPhaul and Lipscomb do not fall prey to the use of fallacies also helps to persuade the reader of their opinion. It makes their article more understandable and allows the reader to form their own opinions on the subject. In conclusion, Lipscomb and McPhaul have created an article that brings the violence experienced by health care professionals to the public in a way they can understand.

Works Cited

Lipscomb, Jane, and Kathleen M. McPhaul. "Harming the Healers." *The Baltimore Sun* 22 Sept. 2010: Baltimore ed.: 19. Print.

Weida, Stacy, and Karl Stolley. "Using Rhetorical Strategies for Persuasion." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Purdue University, 13 July 2010. Web. 3 Oct. 2010.

Dear Professor Brizee,
I am honored that you want to use my essay. You have my permission to use it wherever you see fit. I hope you have a great semester.
Thank you,
Kasey Seymour