



Forensic Nursing: A Review

Vijayreddy Vandali^{1*} and Ravindra H N²

¹Asst Prof, Sumandeep Nursing College, Sumandeep Vidyapeeth, Vadodara, Gujarat, India

²Principal, Sumandeep Nursing College, Sumandeep Vidyapeeth, Vadodara, Gujarat, India



Greentree Group

Received: 17.01.2017

Edited : 18.02.2017

Accepted: 28.02.2017

Published: 15.03.2017



ABSTRACT

Forensic nursing is a youngest/innovative nursing specialty in the world, the nursing professionals are trained to give treatment and collect evidence in matters relating to the law. The term applied to nurses working in many different areas of clinical practice, such as high security hospitals, medium secure units, low secure units, acute mental health wards, specialized private hospitals, psychiatric intensive care units, court liaison schemes, and outpatient, community and rehabilitation services. Rarely is the term defined in the general literature and as a concept it is multifaceted. Forensic nursing is found to derive from forensic practice

KEYWORDS

Forensic nursing, Definition, review

INTRODUCTION

Forensic means “pertaining to the law,” specifically, that which is related to public debate Latin- forensis: ‘a forum’.

A forensic nurse is a nurse who provides specialized care for patients who are victims and/or perpetrators of trauma. However, the specialized role of forensic nurse goes far beyond medical care; forensic nurses also have a specialized knowledge of the legal system and skills in injury identification, evaluation and documentation. After attending to a patient’s immediate medical needs, a forensic nurse often collects evidence, provides medical testimony in court, and consults with legal authorities.

Definition: A forensic nurse refers to a nursing professional trained to give treatment and collect evidence in matters relating to the law¹.

Forensic nursing is defined as the application of the nursing process to public or legal proceedings, and the application of

forensic health care in the scientific investigation of trauma and/or death related to abuse, violence, criminal activity, liability, and accidents².

HISTORY

AND

DEVELOPMENT

The concept of forensic nursing emerged from the practice of clinical forensic medicine. A subspecialty of forensic medicine defined as the application of forensic medical knowledge and techniques to living patients has existed in Europe and Great Britain as well as Asia, South America, Australia, Africa, and many other countries for more than 2 centuries (McLay, 1990). Medical professionals in this field go by various titles but most often are referred to as police surgeons, forensic medical officers, and most recently, forensic medical examiners. The role of the police surgeon or forensic medical examiner in the United Kingdom served as the conceptual model



for the development of the clinical forensic⁵.

Eligibility: Forensic nursing is a nursing specialty; a person becomes a nurse before becoming a forensic nurse.

Area of work: Usually a forensic nurse works in hospitals, community anti-violence programs, coroners and medical examiners offices, corrections institutions and psychiatric hospitals. Forensic nurses may also be called on in mass disasters or community crisis situations³.

Career Specialties for Forensic Nurse:

- SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner)
- Medical Examiner's office
- Medical Legal Consultant
- Emergency Room Nursing
- Medico legal death investigator
- Evidence collection trainer
- Law enforcement teams

Forensic Nurse Specialties:

Forensic nursing encompasses a body of specialty professions that serve unique and critical roles to the health care and judicial systems. Forensic nurses might treat assault victims, investigate crime scenes or provide health care in a correctional facility.

1. Correctional Nursing Specialists

These specialists provide efficient, quality health care to individuals detained by the courts, including those in jail, prison,

juvenile offender facilities and other correctional institutions.

2. Forensic Clinical Nurse Specialists

These specialists hold a master's or doctoral forensic nursing degree and use their advanced training to serve as expert clinicians, teachers, researches, consultants and administrators in different forensic settings. They may work in emergency rooms, sexual assault examination programs, psychiatric forensic treatment units or death investigation teams.

3. Forensic Gerontology Specialists

These specialists help investigate cases involving the abuse, neglect or exploitation of elders and work to raise awareness regarding legal and human rights issues. These forensic nurses typically work in hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities dedicated to caring for the elderly.

4. Forensic Nurse Investigators

Forensic nurse investigators uncover the circumstances surrounding an unexpected or violent death. Typically employed in a medical examiner's or coroner's office, forensic nurse investigators examine the body, study the scene, assist in autopsies and collect medical and social history information on the deceased in order to determine the exact cause of death. Forensic nurse investigators often work with nurse coroners or death investigators.



5. Forensic Psychiatric Nurses

Forensic psychiatric nurses specialize in managing offenders with psychological, social and behavioral disorders. They assess and select patients for treatment, provide rehabilitative care and supervise a patient's actions within the community.

6. Legal Nurse Consultants

Legal nurse consultants aid attorneys working on civil cases where the law and medicine overlap. Some of these situations might include medical malpractice, personal injury, workers' compensation and probate. Legal nurse consultants apply their forensic nursing education and clinical experience to interpret research and analyze the medically-related information relevant to a case or claim.

7. Nurse Coroners or Death Investigators

Nurse coroners or death investigators apply their nursing skills to crime scene investigations. A nurse coroner or death investigator analyzes the scene and examines the body in order to approximate the time of death and find medical clues that might explain the cause.

8. Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners

Sexual assault nurse examiners offer compassionate, prompt care to victims of sexual assault. They assess and evaluate injuries that a victim has suffered; locate,

collect and package forensic evidence relevant to the crime⁴.

International Association of Forensic Nurses:

This Association founded in 1992, promoted the education of forensic nurses and the implementation of forensic nursing roles worldwide. The vision of the founding group was to develop an organization that would encompass a wide and diverse body of those who practice nursing within the arena of the law. Nurses who apply concepts and strategies of forensic science while providing nursing interventions fall within this field of practice. The organization holds the annual Scientific Assembly of Forensic Nurses for the purpose of disseminating knowledge and expertise to members and nonmembers from the United States and abroad⁶.

Conflict of interest: Nil

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank all my colleagues.

Ethical clearance: Not required

Funding: Self



REFERENCES

1. American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants; International Association of Forensic Nurses; Forensic Education; U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime Bulletin; Medi-Smart Nursing Education Resources.
2. Hammer, Rita; Moynihan, Barbara; Pagliano, Elaine (2011-06-05). Forensic Nursing: a Handbook for Practice. Jones & Bartlett Publishers. Retrieved 2015-08-15.
3. Alyson Kettles, Phil Woods, (2006) "A concept analysis of 'forensic' nursing", The British Journal of Forensic Practice, Vol. 8 Iss: 3, pp.16 – 27.
4. Lynch, V. A. (1991). Forensic nursing in the emergency department: A new role for the 1990s. Critical Care Nursing Quarterly, 14(3), 69-86.
5. International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN). (2015a). History of the Association
<http://www.forensicnurses.org/?page=AboutUS>
6. International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN). (2015b). Home.
<http://www.forensicnurses.org/>