

EDITORIAL

Forensic Nursing: New Challenging Specialty Field for Nurses

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Forensic nursing is the application of forensic medicine, combined with clinical nursing practice as they are applied to public or legal proceedings in the court. In the nursing field, forensic nursing is a specialty that allows medical care and the law to intersect.

Forensic Nurses play an integral role in bridging the gap between law and medicine. They should be in each and every emergency room.

—Joseph Biden, Former Vice President, United States

Forensic nurses' role is to treat patients involved in crime and sexual assault incidents and care for victims of assault, domestic abuse, child and elder abuse, neglect, and sexual crimes. In addition to this, they have extended role to assist in evidence collection and death investigations. It is the application of forensic and scientific principles of health care combined with biopsychosocial education of the registered nurse in the scientific investigation and treatment of individuals of trauma, death, violent or criminal activity, and traumatic accidents within the clinical or community field.

The nurses should ensure that they follow the chain of custody, so that the evidence is documented and remains admissible in court. Forensic nurses may be called to testify in court of law about the medical information, the evidence that they have collected, and other related role. They are trained in the criminal justice system and medical evidence collection. Forensic nurses should have excellent nursing skills with essential knowledge of the legal system.

Forensic nursing is a newly expanding and challenging field for nurses. The scope of forensic nursing includes health care institutions, correctional institutions, law-related institutions, agencies, and courts. This opens new doors for nurses to undertake a variety of specialized work, such as forensic clinical nurse specialist, child abuse nurse examiner, forensic psychiatric nurse, etc. These specialized nurses may work in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, tissue and organ donation departments, prisons, jails, and schools.

Forensic nursing was started as a specialty in the nursing field first in the United States. Then it started in various parts of the world like Sweden, Japan, South Africa, Singapore, and Malaysia. Now, there are various career opportunities abroad, such as Forensic Clinical Nurse Practitioner, Forensic Nurse, Forensic Nurse Investigator, and Legal Nurse Consultant. Also, there are specialty certifications in sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), certified forensic nurse (CFN), certified specialist in forensic nursing (FN-CSp), etc. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that registered nurses earn a median salary of \$67,490 per year.

Virginia Lynch visited India in December 2002. At that time, an introductory seminar was held at the Government Medical College, Patiala, where doctors, nurses, police officials, advocates, and judges gathered together. They were introduced to the concept of forensic nursing in India and its utility to the investigating officers and the judiciary. After this, there were similar lectures at various institutions in Punjab to introduce and develop this specialty. Also, through many national conferences, attempts were made to popularize the field and lead to further development in India. It aroused a great interest toward this specialty throughout India.

Victims of violence and abuse need care from trained and qualified health professionals to treat the trauma associated with crime. The well-trained qualified nurses in the specialty of forensic nursing in clinical and community settings provide competent care to patients in forensic care settings. Expanding roles of nurses with quality training in the advancing field of forensic science and technology help toward effective administration of justice. It will necessarily help to collaborate and coordinate the nursing field with legal and police personnel, allied health professionals, families, and communities. With training and hiring forensic nurses, communities will have a vital link to the administration of justice.

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