

Forensic Nursing - An Overview

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Abstract: *Forensic nursing as the practice of nursing to apply forensic health care in the scientific investigation of forensic cases. It is an evolving specialty that seeks to address issues related healthcare matter having a medico - legal component. Specially recommended qualifications are required for forensic nurses to qualify in this fields. Forensic nurses play a very important role in the forensic examination and investigation of victims. This article highlights about the insight of Forensic nursing including Definition, History and development, subspecialty, code of ethics of forensic nurse, Forensic nursing skill and Roles and responsibilities of Forensic Nurses.*

Keywords: Forensic Nursing, Forensic Nurse, victims, Violence, Trauma, Nurse attorney.

1. Introduction

Forensic nursing is a global application of nursing where health and legal regulation collide. It is one of the youngest nursing specialties growing rapidly. It involves patient care in the context of evidence documentation, collection and preservation effort. The formal recognition of forensic nursing as a sub specialty in nursing was documented in the year of early 1890s. The term forensic nursing was officially coined in the year of 1992. In 2021 the Indian Nursing Council introduced Forensic nursing as a course in the undergraduate Nursing Curriculum.

Definition:

Forensic nursing is the application of the nursing sciences to public and legal proceedings. It includes application of forensic healthcare in the scientific investigation of trauma or death related to abuse, violence, criminal offenses, liability, accidents and events of nature.



History and development of Forensic nursing:

1970s: Nurses recognized the need of victims of sexual assault.

1976: First Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program was established in Tennessee and Texas, United States.

1986: Virginia Lynch proposed creation of the forensic nursing specialty.

1990s: Development of training for nurses in sexual assaults.

1991: Forensic nursing was formally recognized by the American Academy of Forensic sciences.

1992: The word Forensic Nursing was coined.

1992: International Association of forensic nurses was founded in the USA.

1995: American Nurses Association recognized the forensic nursing specialty, prompting the establishment of the international association of forensic nurses.

1997: International Association of forensic nurses and American Nurses Association published scope and standards of forensic nursing practice.

2000s: Forensic subspecialties like forensic psychiatric nursing, correctional nursing and legal nurse consulting was established.

2002: Virginia Lynch visited Punjab, In India Rakesh Gorea played a important role in introducing forensic nursing in India.

2009: Indo Pacific academy of forensic nursing sciences was launched

2015: On year post basic diploma in forensic nursing was started at Gujarat forensic sciences university.

2020: Indian Nursing Council started the M. Sc in Forensic nursing.

2021: Indian Nursing council introduced Forensic nursing in the undergraduate nursing program.

Subspecialties in Forensic Nursing:

1) Sexual assault Nurse examiner:

A registered nurse who has been specially trained to provide comprehensive care to sexual assault patients and competency in conducting a forensic examinations.

2) Forensic nurse death investigator:

A licensed nurse who carries out the duties of a death investigator in accordance with the standards and procedures established under the medical examiner of death investigation.

3) Forensic psychiatric nurse:

A forensic psychiatric nurse serves as direct care provider and patient advocate in caring for a patient with mental illness.

4) Clinical forensic nurse specialist:

Emergency department nurses are often the first to encounter a patient with forensic issues patients who have been assaulted in any accidents or various types of injuries.

5) Nurse coroner:

Nurse coroner is a nurse who has experience as a death investigator and brings to the role a broad perspective when investigating circumstances that lead to death.

6) Correctional nursing specialist:

Forensic correctional nurse specializes in the care, treatment and rehabilitation of persons in Jail or prison.

- 7) **Legal nurse consultant and Nurse attorney:**
Nurse attorney practice laws, generally specializing in civil and criminal cases involving health care related issues.
- 8) **Humanitarian forensic nurse:**
Humanitarian forensics is the branch of science involving forensic science for humanitarian purposes.
- 9) **Forensic pediatric nurse examiner:**
A pediatric forensic nurse provide medico - legal examination of pediatric patients where child abuse may be suspected or confirmed has been reported to police.
- 10) **Forensic nurse Hospitalist:**
Forensic nurse hospitalist provides expert care and leadership in the hospital setting specific to patients who have experienced trauma and have forensic implications associated with their care.

Code of Ethics for forensic nurses:

a) American Nurses Association Code of ethics:

- **Respect of human dignity:**
Treats all individuals and families with human dignity in providing physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of care.
- **Protecting patient rights:**
Appreciate individual's right to make decisions about their care, and therefore gives adequate and accurate information or enabling them to make informed choices.
- **Accountability:**
It means the nurses are responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others.
- **Advancing the profession:**
Contributes to the core of professional knowledge by conducting and participating in research.
- **Participating in the profession's goal:**
Participates in supervision and education of students and other formal care providers.
- **Professional growth:**
Takes responsibility for updating own knowledge and competencies.

b) International Association of Forensic Nurses Code of ethics:

- **Responsibility to the public and the environment:**
Forensic nurse has a professional responsibility for health and welfare of the public.
- **Fidelity to clients:**
Forensic nurses should serve patients faithfully and with honesty. They should respect confidentiality and advice patients about the limits of confidentiality as determined by their practice setting.
- **Obligation to sciences:**
Forensic nurses should seek to advance nursing and forensic science, understand the limits of their knowledge and respect the truth.
- **Dedication to colleagues:**
Forensic nurses should treat colleagues with respect, share ideas honestly, and give credit for their contributions.

Forensic Nursing skills:

1) Advocacy:

Patient advocacy is about sharing, expressing and highlighting the rights of a patient.

2) Attention to detail:

It can help ensure forensic nurses do not miss anything important. Identifying evidence, sample collection and photography.

3) Communication:

Written and oral communication skill can help the forensic nurse to write report, communicate with patient, patient families, police and court.

4) Empathy:

Empathy and compassion are very useful, provide proper patient care and earning patient trust and cooperation.

5) Coping:

Having healthy coping skills can help stay separate from cases and continue providing quality care to the patients.

Roles and Responsibilities of Forensic Nurses:

- Identify issues that will have legal impact on the society.
- Document and photograph injuries, collect and preserve evidence.
- Work with grieving family members when death comes unexpectedly.
- Contribute to disaster planning and response.
- Treating crime related injuries.
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Act as consultant with risk management administration.
- Review the medical record to facilitate the legal counsel
- Perform lab testing for patients based on the history provided by the patient.
- Develop and implement orientation and continuing education programs for the staff related to forensic nursing.
- In a school setting is able to identify children at risk for abuse or neglect.
- In the home care setting is able to assess the living conditions for safety; assess the patient for evidence of exploitation, abuse or neglect.
- In Law enforcement settings assess the patient for evidence of abuse or neglect, provides referral for community service agency assistance.

2. Conclusion

Forensic nursing is a dynamic field that combines compassion, expertise and justice. Forensic nursing has a variety of roles. Within the specialty of forensic nursing there are many opportunities are there. In India, the demand for forensic nursing services has been steadily increasing. The Nurses can continuously updating knowledge and skill in forensic nursing to reflect best practices.

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