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Forensic nursing: An emerging scope in India

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Abstract

Forensic nursing is today's need of the hour. It is an ever-evolving and dynamic specialty. There are numerous settings in which a nurse can operate. Forensic nurses help victims of natural disasters, sexual assault, and domestic abuse in addition to working with cadavers. The literature on this newly popular specialization is scarce. Knowing about forensic nursing will make an experienced nurse better able to assist victims and their families, and they may even be able to act as a liaison between the legal and medical system. They must possess the abilities necessary to give patients and cadavers with high-quality, evidence-based care that meets standards of care.

Keywords: Forensic nursing, scope, role and responsibility

Introduction

Nurses are there when the last breath is taken, and nurses are there when the first breath is taken. Although it is more enjoyable to celebrate the birth, it is just as important to comfort in death. Christine Belle. The core of healthcare system is the nurse. According to Virginia Henderson Nursing is Defined as -Assisting the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death) that an individual would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge^[1].

The nurse provides safe, effective, high-quality and comprehensive care to every patient. In India, the field of forensic nursing is relatively new and evolving. A forensic nurse is a nurse who specializes in treating patients who are involved in medico-legal matters and dealing deceased bodies^[2]. Forensic nursing is the use of the nursing process in public or legal procedures, along with the application of forensic medical care. It is the scientific study of trauma and/or death patients related to abuse, violence, criminal activity, negligence, natural catastrophes, rape victim and accidents. Forensics nursing is one of the career choices in many health science areas. Forensic nursing is essential to delivering the victim with thorough, safe, and efficient care^[3]. Nursing still lacks a formal place in India's nursing curriculum manuals.

Search Strategy

The search was performed using the following electronic databases: Medline, CINAHL, Social Sciences Citation Index, Google Scholar, Psych INFO. Hand searching of the reference lists of the relevant publications and published

articles on Forensic Nursing that published since 1990 was done. Keyword used to search the literature review included.

Forensic Nursing, scope, trends and preventive measurell. Screening of the abstracts and published article was done. Studies those covering these aspects were considered for the review. Studies that do not cover any of the above-mentioned items or published in predatory journals were excluded from the review

Scope of Forensic Nursing^[14,16]

The field of forensic nursing encompasses a wide range of specializations including.

Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNE)

A registered nurse can works as a forensic nurse examiner followed by certification in the field of forensics. FNEs inspect victims of all ages who have experienced sexual assault, rape, physical and/or sexual abuse in children, intimate partner violence, non-fatal strangulation, and human trafficking. They are the part of criminal investigations. In addition; they use technology such as forensic photography to gather evidence, offer crisis intervention, provide care and can refer victims for rehabilitative care.

Legal nurse consultants (LNC)

LNC is a registered nurse (RN) who offers medical advice regarding legal matters. LNCs review and evaluate legal data. Legal nurse consultants advise on legal matters using their expertise in healthcare also advice on medical facts and evidence for ongoing cases to their clients.

Forensic psychiatric nurses

A registered nurse (RN) specialized in psychiatric nursing are known as a forensic mental health nurse, or forensic psychiatric nurse (FPN). In order to comprehend the mental health of both criminals and victims of crime, forensic mental health nurses apply their nursing education, which integrates elements of medicine and law. They assist individuals who have suffered physical or emotional trauma.

Correctional nurse consultants

Quality health care services are offered by correctional nursing specialists to people under court custody, including those in jail, juvenile detention centres, and other facilities. Their duties include caring of ill, conducting regular physical examinations, and giving medication.

Forensic Nurse Death Investigators (FNDI)

Forensic nurse death investigator, are registered nurse and require at least two years of experience, ideally in an emergency room or critical care setting. They can collaborate with police to identify the precise cause of death and to estimate the time of death. They are typically called to the scene of the crime to investigate the body, obtain samples of blood and tissue, arrange for the body to be brought to the mortuary for an autopsy, and gather evidence that will aid in the investigation of the crime. Forensic nurses can be crucial in the field of death investigation, both at the site of the crime and during post-mortem examination. They could assist with receiving deceased bodies, police paperwork, record-keeping, handling legal requirements, documenting the body's condition, etc. in the mortuary.

Sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE)

The number of sexual assault cases is rising, and the victims of these horrible acts endure great physical and mental suffering. The victims of sexual assault are easily bonded to by a female forensic nurse. Sexual assault survivors receive immediate medical attention as well as emotional assistance from sexual assault nurse examiners. They record the assault report, conduct the required medical examinations to gather vital evidence, and they might even provide expert witness testimony in court. Additionally, it is their duty to make recommendations for the victim's on-going care. Sexual assault nurse examiner is qualified to perform sexual assault assessments and victim management at the same time. They also offer services to individual clients, victims and family counselling and expert witness in court.

Forensic nurse educators

Forensic nurse educators also impart knowledge regarding forensic nursing, certification programs and continuing education in forensic nursing. In addition to sexual assault examination techniques, they can instruct students on domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, and collecting, preserving, and documenting evidence. They can address a broad range of subjects pertaining to particular forensic nursing roles, such as forensic nurse examiners, forensic psychiatric nurses, and nurse death investigators.

Nurses' role as a forensic nurse ^[15, 16]

1. Providing trauma victims with medical care while also ensuring that appropriate forensic evidence is collected.

2. Assisting police investigators in collecting evidence and providing victims' histories of sexual assault cases.
3. Helps in sexual assault assessments
4. The nurse is frequently the first to meet the victims (physical, domestic, sexual, religious, or social assault).
5. Comprehending the features of an extensive range of injuries
6. Acting as an expert witness
7. Nurses are able to record wounds, gather biological specimens, and save garments that may contain signs of assault.
8. Evidence related to poisoning cases—such as vomits, stomach aspirate, urine samples, soiled cloth, etc. qualified forensic nurses can assist with the collection, preservation, and maintenance of the samples'.
9. Forensic nurse specialist offers specialized care to victims of intentional or unintentional trauma.
10. The nurse conducts physical examinations and takes medical histories, takes medical forensic photos, identifies and gathers evidence, and records the victims' conditions.
11. The forensic nurse can act as a nurse educator to the victim's family.
12. Nurse record proper documentation for the patient's legal protection.
13. Providing physical and psychological care to victims of violent crimes.
14. Forensic nurses can gather evidence from both victims and suspects.
15. Forensic nurse can play important role in the mortuary by helping to receive deceased bodies, keeping MLC patient records, and handling legal documentation.
16. Forensic nurses help victims of natural disasters deal with the psychological and physical consequences from the traumatic experiences.
17. Nurses can provide empathy and compassion to victim's family.
18. Comprehensive forensic assessment of victims.
19. Reviewing and synthesizing the literature in the field of forensic nursing.
20. Serving as a contact between clients, experts, medical professionals, and attorneys.

Future outlooks

In India, forensic nursing has a plethora of opportunities. Working in forensic field may impact emotionally and likelihood of emotional trauma is high. In order to withstand the emotional impact, nurses must possess sufficient training.

Postgraduate and graduate courses ought to be created. It's imperative to support forensic nursing research. They are vital to the fields of forensic toxicology, forensic pathology, death inquiry, and crime scene investigation. Since there is a large demand for forensic nurses. The nurse might not be fully aware of their various roles as a forensic nurse. To define the scope, forensic nurses must have their position defined and acknowledged. It's critical to explain how nurses can provide forensic patients with effective and medico-legal care. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN), have mandated that legal concepts and materials be taught to undergraduate students of nursing ^[17, 18].

Conclusion

Forensic nursing is today's need of the hour. The field of forensic nursing is dynamic and constantly expanding. A nurse can work in a variety of environments. In addition to working with cadavers, forensic nurses also assist victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and natural calamities. The nurse's empathy and compassion will help the patient receive better care. There is a paucity of information regarding this emerging specialty. An experienced nurse who understands this notion will be more equipped to deal with victims and their families as well as the potential to serve as a link between legal and medical environments. In order to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, nurses need to be more than just experts at spotting injuries and evidence. They also need to be equipped with the skills needed to provide standards of care, deliver high-quality and evidence-based care to the cadavers and victims.

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