



Forensic Nursing a New Horizon in Patient Care and Crime Investigation

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Received Date: February 14, 2024; Published Date: August 05, 2024

Abstract

Forensic nursing is the one of the most rapidly growing, specialty in nursing profession. It is defined as application of the nursing knowledge in the investigation of a crime, in legal proceedings, and application of forensic health care in treatment of trauma and/or death, related to abuse, sexual violence, criminal activity, liability, and accidents. The mother of forensic nursing *Virginia Lynch*, discovered her passion for the field when she visited a crime lab in 1982. According to her, evidence such as clothing, specimens, and records have so much importance but was often lost unintentionally and destroyed the evidences to the authorities when the victim is being treated in a health care facility. This specialty has started to be recognized worldwide and is helping to promote an international focus on violence. The forensic nurses now becoming a vital force for healthy relationship needed between the health care and justice systems. They are the first point of contact between the victim of crime and the health care system and the bodies of victims of physical assault and violence, living or dead, and collect the physical evidences required for criminal investigations. Looking into the importance of the field various international organizes has started certificate courses and due to the need of the hour various sub speciality developed time to time such as clinical forensic nurse, forensic nurse investigator, forensic nurse examiner etc. various prospects of this field in discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Forensic Nursing; Crime Investigation; Health Care; Violence; Physical Evidences

Introduction

Nursing is a noble profession in patient care since ancient days. The profession is one of the prime responsibilities in the patient care of both physically and mentally ill patient. They worked as an important person in the patient care and member of team of treating a patient or in operation theatre. Forensic nursing is one of the most recent, but rapidly growing, specialties in nursing profession. It is defined as application of the nursing knowledge in the investigation of a crime, in legal proceedings, and application of forensic health care in treatment of trauma and/or death, related to abuse,

sexual violence, criminal activity, liability, and accidents [1,2].

Virginia Lynch, the mother of forensic nursing, discovered her passion for the field when she visited a crime lab in 1982. According to her, evidence such as clothing, specimens, and records have so much importance but was often lost unintentionally and destroyed the evidences to the authorities when the victim is being treated in a health care facility. Commonly the nursing practice is the holistic approach to patient's body, mind as well as spirituality. With the establishment of forensic nursing the role of a nurse is also included in the helping administration of justice to the

victims of the crime and collect the proper forensic evidences and passed on to the criminal justice system for proper investigation. This specialty has started to be recognized worldwide and is helping to promote an international focus on violence. The forensic nurses now becoming a vital force for healthy relationship needed between the health care and justice systems [1].

Forensic nurses are registered nurses who received specialized education and training to provide care to patients who experienced victimization or violence such as sexual assault, domestic violence, child or elder abuse, human trafficking, assault, or homicide. They also called at scene of crime to assess and collect evidence such as specialized digital photographs of injuries, specimens such as semen, blood, skin tissue, hairs or fibres, and swabs for DNA analysis, clothing, bullets, etc. from the perpetrator or scene of the crime. They are the first point of contact between the victim of crime and the health care system and the bodies of victims of physical assault and violence, living or dead, and collect the physical evidences required for criminal investigations. They consult, cooperate, and communicate with law enforcement agencies, and sometimes they can be called on to testify in court or law as expert witness. They are also educated in psychosocial skills to provide comfort, emotional support, and education to the victims and their relatives, especially during taking consent for physical examination, preparation for surgical procedure and collection of evidence [3].

Forensic nurses may be employed with the organizations that deal with domestic violence and ill-treatment of elderly. They often called on to assist after mass disasters natural or manmade and other crises in communities. Advanced forensic nurse practitioners also work directly within the legal system as legal nurse consultants, they help in investigation and provide expert opinions for lawyers while preparing their cases. Therefore their practice integrates with sociology (socio-political impact), criminology (violence, crime, social sanctions, criminal justice and human rights), clinical and criminal investigations (forensic science) and education (nursing and medicolegal knowledge, education to staff, patient and their clients) [4,5].

"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

Certification Opportunities

The Commission for Forensic Nursing Certification (CFNC) currently offers two professional credentials: the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner-Adult/Adolescent (SANE-A[®]) and

the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner-Paediatric (SANE-P[®]). Both credentials are recognized by the American Nurses Credentialing Centre's (ANCC) Magnet Program[®]. From 2012-2017, the CFNC collaborated with the American Nurses Credentialing Center to offer its credential by portfolio in Advanced Forensic Nursing [6].

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE-A[®]/SANE-P[®]) - The earned credentials of SANE-A[®] and SANE-P[®] designate that the recipient has achieved the highest standards of forensic nursing for sexual assault nurse examiners. Nurse examiners initially become certified by meeting the eligibility requirements and achieving a passing score on the certification examination [7].

Types of Services

Clinical Forensic Nurse

Provide care to survivors of crime related violence, injury and death that occur within the healthcare institutions and prepare documents and collect evidences.

Forensic Nurse Investigator

Work with coroner / medical examiner's to help in scientific investigation and circumstances of death.

Forensic Nurse Examiner

Help in analysis of physical and psychopathological evaluation of trauma and suspected death.

Forensic Custodial or Institutional Nurse

Specialized in the care, treatment and rehabilitation of person who have been sentenced prisons or jails.

Legal Nurse Consultant

Appear as an expert witness and educate judicial personals about personal injuries, product liabilities, and malpractice both in civil and criminal cases.

Nurse Attorney

A registered nurse with a juris doctorate degree practice as attorney at law specialized in civil and criminal cases related to health care issues.

Nurse Coroner

Registered nurse serving as investigator and certification of death in question to determine manner and cause of death, identify the deceased and inform to his/her relative.

Forensic Nursing Organizations

If you're interested in becoming a forensic nurse or would want to learn more, check out these websites:

- **International Association of Forensic Nurses:** The IAFN develops the guidelines for the education of forensic nurses as well as continuing education opportunities. The Commission for Forensic Nursing Certification falls under its umbrella. They also publish the Journal of Forensic Nursing. Membership benefits include publications, discounts on certification renewal, networking opportunities such as conferences.
- **American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants:** The mission of this Association is the professional enhancement and growth of registered nurses practicing in the specialty area of legal nurse consulting and to advance this nursing specialty.

Summary

Forensic nurse examiner is a clinical investigator represents as a member of health care providers team, law enforcement officials and forensic scientist joined in a holistic approach for intervention of physical, psychological, and sexual violence. It also brings with it's a new identity, new language, new terms and new definitions. It expands its traditional concepts of health care to include the law [8].

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