

SIGNIFICANCE OF FORENSIC SCIENCE IN NURSING CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

In the context of a legal or criminal inquiry, forensic nursing is a specialty area of nursing that focuses on providing care to victims of trauma or abuse. In addition to providing medical attention and assistance, forensic nurses are educated in the collection of evidence, domestic violence, child abuse, and other types of violence against victims. Through recording injuries, gathering and preserving evidence, and providing expert witness testimony in court, they play a critical role in the legal system. In addition to working in clinics, hospitals, and prisons, forensic nurses can also be found in specialised forensic nursing teams. The inclusion of forensic science in nursing curricula can enhance the breadth of nursing education and make it more pertinent to the changing demands and difficulties in healthcare. It gives nurses a broad range of skills that they may use in non-traditional healthcare contexts, which makes them invaluable in patient care, public health, and the legal system.

Keywords: Forensics, Nursing, Curriculum, Relevance, Incorporation.

INTRODUCTION

Forensic science is a multidisciplinary field that involves the application of various scientific principles and techniques to solve crimes and legal issues. It plays a crucial role in the criminal justice system by providing objective and scientific evidence to aid in the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases. Forensic scientists use their expertise to analyze physical evidence, identify suspects, and reconstruct events to establish the facts surrounding a crime. It includes Crime Scene Investigation in which forensic scientists often work at crime scenes to collect and preserve physical evidence, such as fingerprints, DNA samples, bloodstains, and firearm residue. They must carefully document and photograph the scene to maintain the integrity of the evidence. Physical and Biological Evidence Analysis where different subfields within forensic science specialize in analyzing specific types of evidence. For example, forensic DNA analysis is used to identify individuals based on their genetic material, while forensic toxicology examines substances like drugs or poisons in the body. Digital Forensics which in the the age of technology, digital forensics involves the retrieval and analysis of data from electronic devices like computers, smartphones, and storage media to uncover digital evidence in cybercrimes or other investigations. Firearms and Ballistics where forensic experts can examine firearms and ammunition, matching bullets and casings to specific weapons, and providing insights into the trajectory of bullets and the sequence of shots fired. Forensic Pathology in which forensic pathologists perform autopsies and examine human remains to determine the cause and manner of death. This is particularly important in cases of suspicious or unexplained deaths. Forensic Anthropology it refers to forensic anthropologists use their knowledge of human skeletal anatomy to help identify human remains, establish the biological profile of the deceased, and determine factors like age, sex, and ancestry. Forensic Entomology where in cases involving decomposed remains, forensic entomologists study the life cycles of insects found at the crime scene to estimate the time of death. Handwriting Analysis and Document Examination where experts in this field analyze handwriting, ink, paper, and other document-related characteristics to determine the authenticity of documents and signatures. Forensic Odontology in which forensic dentists use dental records and bite mark analysis to identify individuals or provide evidence in cases involving human bite marks. Criminalistics, This is a broad field that includes the application of various scientific techniques to analyze physical evidence and provide expert testimony in court.

FORENSIC NURSING

Forensic nursing is a specialized field of nursing that involves caring for individuals who have experienced trauma or violence, often in the context of a legal or criminal investigation. Forensic nurses are trained to collect evidence, provide medical care, and support victims of various forms of violence, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, and more. They play a crucial role in the legal system by documenting injuries, collecting and preserving evidence, and testifying in court as expert witnesses. Forensic nurses may work in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, correctional facilities, or as part of a specialized forensic nursing team. They require a unique skill set that combines medical knowledge with an understanding of the legal system and the ability to provide compassionate care to victims. Forensic science plays a critical role in both criminal and civil cases, helping to establish the truth and contribute to the pursuit of justice. It relies on rigorous scientific methods, and the results are often used as evidence in legal proceedings.

ESSENCE OF FORENSIC NURSING IN NURSING CURRICULUM

Various disciplines of research on the duties and practises of nurses have been formed as a result of advancements in science, technology, and healthcare. One such area of research is forensic nursing. A speciality in nursing, forensic nursing is the application of nursing science through legal processes. It is characterised as a field that looks into criminal activity and examines individuals who have committed violent, traumatic, or other illegal acts. In forensic cases, nurses are the first to interact with the persons who are connected to the events, speak with their family or relatives, handle their possessions while being examined, and come into contact with the laboratory specimen of the individuals.

Thus, it is thought that by working as a member of a forensic team, forensic nurses with specialised training in forensic medicine might aid in the resolution of several criminal cases. However, research indicates that the nursing curriculum contains relatively little in the way of forensic information. Increasing the quality of forensic nursing education would really benefit patients and the health care system by resulting in better patient care, safer patient care, easier access to services, more patient satisfaction, more options for people in violent situations, and more confidence and skill among nurses. During identification, collecting, and storage processes, evidence may be missed, misplaced, destroyed, or left undisclosed by nurses without specialised expertise in forensic case evaluation. This may complicate forensic analysis, lead to misguided judgements and unsuccessful cases. Research demonstrates how forensic science

training improves nurses' ability to get evidence. Gathering evidence is a crucial step in the legal process. In a legal proceeding, it is the responsibility of nurses to gather evidence with care, to keep it from vanishing, and to securely transport the protected evidence to the appropriate institutions. The possibility that nurses tamper with the evidence while administering care and treatment out of ignorance might make forensic case investigations more difficult. The nurse may be judged guilty as a result of this. Because of this, nurses are crucial to the identification of court cases as well as the gathering, archiving, and documentation of evidence. Nurses with forensic case management training will be extremely valuable to the judicial system and process. Upon reviewing the papers, it becomes evident that nurses lack adequate understanding of subjects like forensic evidence and forensic nursing. It is crucial that nursing students acquire thorough and adequate training in handling forensic evidence during their undergraduate studies because they will be working professionally in the future.

By enabling the training of nurses who give patients better patient care, safety, and trust, lessen the load on the healthcare system, and contribute to a higher standard of healthcare, strengthening forensic nursing education will boost patient satisfaction. A recent addition to the nursing specialty landscape, forensic nursing has been steadily gaining traction in our nation. In our nation, there are no officially recognised forensic nurses with established job descriptions. Undergraduate and graduate programmes in forensic nursing are quite rare in our nation. Most nurses who review forensic evidence are not trained in special education. Based on our observations, it appears that nurses handling forensic cases are not well-versed in the procedures used to gather, preserve, or how the chain of evidence is formed.

As a result, competent forensic nurses who possess professional leadership and problem-solving abilities and who can handle forensic cases on a national and worldwide level with an ethical holistic approach must be trained. It is crucial that this instruction begin at the undergraduate level. However, no study has been done to look at nurses' knowledge of identifying, gathering, storing, and recording forensic evidence, even though there are studies that show student nurses' knowledge of forensic nursing in Turkey in the literature.

Incorporating forensic science into nursing curriculum can offer several significant benefits, both for nursing students and the healthcare system as a whole. Some essential points are highlighted herewith:

Enhancing Clinical Skills: Forensic science provides nursing students with a unique perspective on assessing, documenting, and collecting evidence related to injuries, illnesses, or suspicious deaths. This enhances their clinical skills and attention to detail, which is essential in providing

high-quality patient care.

Improved Patient Care: Nurses who understand forensic principles can better identify and document injuries, signs of abuse, and other potential criminal activities, such as drug abuse or sexual assault. This can lead to improved patient care, early intervention, and protection of vulnerable individuals.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Forensic nursing often involves working with law enforcement, forensic experts, and legal professionals. Teaching nursing students about forensic science fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, preparing them to work effectively in healthcare teams dealing with complex cases.

Legal and Ethical Knowledge: Understanding forensic science helps nurses navigate legal and ethical dilemmas in healthcare. They learn about issues like patient rights, informed consent, and the obligations of healthcare professionals when dealing with potential criminal cases.

Preventing Medical Errors: A strong foundation in forensic science can help nurses avoid medical errors and misdiagnoses. For instance, recognizing the signs of adverse drug reactions or medical malpractice can contribute to patient safety.

Community Health: Nurses who are educated in forensic nursing can play a vital role in community health. They can identify public health issues, such as trends in violence or substance abuse, and contribute to interventions and prevention strategies.

Victim Advocacy: Forensic nurses often work with victims of violence, abuse, or trauma. Knowledge of forensic science enables nurses to provide better emotional support, access to resources, and appropriate care to these individuals.

Expert Witness and Legal Consultation: Some nurses choose to specialize in forensic nursing as expert witnesses or legal consultants. In this capacity, they can provide valuable insights in court cases and contribute to the justice system.

Research Opportunities: Forensic science provides a rich area for nursing research. Topics like forensic evidence collection, injury patterns, and the effectiveness of healthcare interventions in criminal cases offer ample opportunities for scientific inquiry.

Adaptability: In an ever-evolving healthcare landscape, nurses with a background in forensic science are better prepared to adapt to new challenges, such as emerging infectious diseases, bioterrorism threats, or environmental disasters.

However, there are also some considerations to keep in mind while we see only the brighter aspect of it.

Limited Resources: Nursing curricula are already packed with essential content, and adding more topics can be challenging. It's important to ensure that the inclusion of forensic nursing doesn't come at the expense of other critical nursing skills and knowledge.

Specialization: Not all nursing students may be interested in or ultimately pursue a career in forensic nursing, so it may be more appropriate to offer forensic nursing as an elective or as part of advanced nursing programs.

Legal and Ethical Implications: Forensic nursing involves working with legal systems, which can raise complex ethical and legal questions. Nursing programs that include forensic nursing must provide appropriate education on these issues.

SUMMARY

Incorporating forensic science into nursing curriculum can make nursing education more comprehensive and relevant to the evolving healthcare needs and challenges. It equips nurses with a diverse skill set that goes beyond traditional healthcare settings, making them valuable contributors to patient care, public health, and the justice system. Also the inclusion of forensic nursing in nursing curricula can be beneficial, but it should be done thoughtfully and in a way that complements the core nursing curriculum. Providing elective courses or additional training for those interested in pursuing forensic nursing as a specialization might be a suitable approach.

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