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New forensic roles for the 21st century: “Is the ‘sanctioned’ role of the physician- last century?”

By the end of the twentieth century, forensic specialty roles were well established in both the forensic sciences and the forensic behavioral sciences. Social factors (public inquiries, class actions suits, human rights movements, advanced technology) prompted forensic specialty evolution where there was a need for a medico legal role. The history of forensic psychiatric/mental health in Canada and the United States will be traced through a timeline of key laws and acts, social movements, and role development. Forensic educational programs began to appear in the curricula of colleges and universities. The *forensic focus* became a popular career choice and area of study for many of the health science disciplines. The sanctioned role of the physician profoundly influenced the role development of sexual assault nurse examiners, as well as forensic psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners. With the shortage of forensic psychiatrists, health care administrators have been considering other disciplines with advanced practice education to fill these roles. Alternative strategies and interventions are needed to best care for the complex and increased numbers of mentally ill offenders and victims of violence in the twenty-first century.

Biography

Arlene Kent-Wilkinson is an Associate Professor, College of Nursing, is a nurse educator who has launched and taught many forensic nursing courses and programs, and online graduate and undergraduate courses on Aboriginal health. She has been recognized nationally and internationally for her pioneering work in forensic nursing education. Findings from her doctoral dissertation on Forensic Nursing Education in North America (2008), has specific implications for interdisciplinary research and inter professional education. She is one of the founding members of FIRST (Forensic Interdisciplinary Research: Saskatchewan Team), and is a member of the Forensic Centre (Forensic Behavioural Sciences and Justice Studies) at the University of Saskatchewan. As PI, She has recently completed a province-wide needs assessment and environmental scan of - the needs of and services for mentally disordered offenders in the province of Saskatchewan. She brings over 30 years of direct clinical experience in mental health including areas of forensic psychiatric/mental health, corrections, acute care psych, addictions and emergency nursing.

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