The precious role of the forensic nurse in sexual assaults

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The science of forensic nursing represents an emerging worldview within the forensic sciences at large. Global human violence brings together the two most powerful systems - health and justice - for effective forensic case management. This is an area lacking in policy and legislation to ensure the forensic patient's protection of the legal, civil and human rights. The shortage of skilled forensic physicians has resulted in deficits in quality forensic services. Recent strategies to improve standards of care for victims of crime, the falsely accused and those wrongly convicted necessitate the application of forensic science to nursing practice. Forensic nursing combines the principles and philosophies of the traditional forensic sciences and those of contemporary nursing science in the clinical investigation of trauma and death. Forensic nurse examiners (FNE) serve as a clinical liaison to forensic medical examiners (FME) while supplementing vital forensic services as questions of innocence or criminality arise. Forensic nursing practice includes medicolegal services for both victims of crime and court-ordered evidence from the suspect or the accused in custody. The FNE, as the first point of contact in the immediate post-trauma period, is in an ideal position to gather information and physical evidence related to the event. Primary forensic responsibilities include the identification of trauma and the recovery of medical/forensic evidence. When sexual violence is reported, it is imperative to skillfully interview patients with appropriate respect and sensitivity to evaluate the nature and scope of injury. It is then necessary to recover, preserve and secure evidence, accurately document findings, coordinate with law enforcement officials, and testify in court if required.

Biography

Virginia A. Lynch, MSN, RN, FCNS, FAAFS, FAAN, is recognized as the preeminent scholar and founder of forensic nursing as a scientific discipline. She is a forensic clinical nurse specialist (FCNS) with extensive experience and education in the forensic and nursing sciences and founder of forensic nursing as a scientific discipline. She achieved her Master's degree from the University of Texas, College of Nursing at Arlington (UTA) in 1990, a program she was instrumental in designing. Her research established the first concept of Clinical Forensic Nursing: a Descriptive in Role Development with a focus on the clinical investigation of crime victims, the survivors and decedents. She was elected to serve as the founding president of the International Association of Forensic Nurses and was named Distinguished Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in 2018. She has established a global consulting program in forensic nursing science, teaching internationally as an independent scholar and resides in Colorado, USA.

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