



REVIEW ARTICLE

FORENSIC NURSING: THE EMERGING FIELD IN INDIA

Dr. Manoj Pathak¹ and Sapna Tiwari²

¹Professor and Head, Department of Forensic Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India; ²Research Scholar, Department of Forensic Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th May, 2024
Received in revised form
19th June, 2024
Accepted 25th July, 2024
Published online 30th August, 2024

Key words:

Leisure, Cultural Activities, Cultural Center, Child.

*Corresponding author:

Dr Adolphe AHONNON

ABSTRACT

The origins of nursing as a proficient and empathetic occupation can be traced back to *Florence Nightingale*, who is famously referred to as the "**Lady with the Lamp**" and she was also known as the founder of modern nursing. Forensic nursing is a modern idea in forensic science that has lately been introduced in India. In this present systematic review paper, we have reviewed the print and electronic media which includes various research articles available in the online journals and textbooks. 'Crime against Women in India' encompasses instances of spousal and familial mistreatment, abductions, physical attacks, and sexual assaults. Amidst the concerning increase in crimes against women, children's, experts emphasizes the need of forensic nurse examiners. There are various roles and responsibilities of forensic nurses in various fields including sexual assault cases, crime scene investigations, forensic psychiatry, forensic toxicology, forensic pathology, death inquiry, elder abuse, member of legal team and correlational contexts. Forensic nursing is an emerging discipline within the profession of nursing that integrates aspects of law enforcement with healthcare. There is a significant need to enhance forensic nursing education in the india due to the extensive opportunities available in this field. It is necessary to establish and execute graduate, postgraduate, and specialty programs similar to those found in developed countries.

Copyright©2024, Manoj Pathak and Sapna Tiwari. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Dr. Manoj Pathak and Sapna Tiwari, 2024. "Forensic Nursing: The Emerging Field in India.". *International Journal of Current Research*, 16, (08), 29481-29484.

INTRODUCTION

The origins of nursing as a proficient and empathetic occupation can be traced back to *Florence Nightingale*, who is famously referred to as the "Lady with the Lamp" and she was also known as the founder of modern nursing. Nightingale's efforts to advance healthcare for humanity established a strong foundation for nursing as a critically important profession in the field of healthcare^[1]. Nurses are healthcare workers who are educated and skilled in providing care and support to individuals who are sick, as well as aiding doctors or dentists.^[1] As the fields of medicine and social sciences progress and broaden their scope of practice, the nursing sciences must also adapt and evolve accordingly. Nurses must explore novel areas in order to stay updated of the evolving demands of society. Additional domains for training and application have emerged within the field of nursing, including pediatric nursing, psychiatric nursing, legal nurse consultant and geriatric nursing, among others. Forensic nursing is a modern idea in forensic science that has lately been introduced in India. This notion unites resources from forensic science, healthcare, and criminal justice in a shared focus on the well-being of crime victims, the accused, and their families. The field of forensic nursing was initially offered to a limited number of institutions and organizations in our country in November 2003.^[1]

Since then, there has been a zealous and widespread positive reaction to this initial introduction in New Delhi and throughout the Punjab region. Presently, nursing students are displaying a strong and passionate interest in pursuing careers as forensic nurse examiners. The primary recipients of this progress will be the specialists in forensic medicine, together with law enforcement authorities. Skilled forensic nurse associates will enhance the ability of forensic medical examiners (FME) and forensic pathologists to carry out their professional responsibilities more effectively. The availability of direct services by forensic nurse experts, who possess specialized training in interacting with those affected by crime or falsely accused of crimes, will be advantageous for society. Forensic nurse examiners are highly skilled at building strong relationships with these particular individuals and can effortlessly clarify complex technicalities and legal obligations. Forensic nurses who possess the ability to conduct interviews with clients in their native language and with empathy are more equipped to address the psychological impact of social trauma. The Indian society will ultimately gain advantages from the implementation and acceptance of forensic nursing services, as has been demonstrated in other regions of the world. The inclusion of forensic nurses in crime investigations will also enhance the accuracy of interpreting

medical elements and preserving biological evidence, providing a boost to the whole investigative process. The integration of forensic nursing science into India's health and judicial systems will ultimately help the social order of India. The application of forensic science to nursing practice is not a recent development, although the formal recognition of this specialized field is really a recent occurrence. Since the 14th century, nurse-midwives have been conducting forensic examinations at the King's command. These examinations include confirming pregnancy, gathering evidence of sexual assault, and presenting testimony in court.^[2] *Bhai Kanhaiya* exemplified a crucial part of forensic nursing by providing relief to war victims and taking care to trauma patients. Today, he is commemorated for his unwavering commitment to the nursing profession and is seen as the perfect example of a male nurse. Prior to the establishment of contemporary forensic nursing as a recognized field, Florence Nightingale introduced the early idea of a forensic nurse during her time in the Crimea. She had carried a lamp while providing cares to war victims. The involvement of nurses in medicolegal cases has been acknowledged since the mid-1970s, when Dr. John Butt, the Chief Medical Examiner in Alberta, Canada, initially established the position of the forensic nurse examiner in death investigations. These nurses serve as representatives of forensic pathologists at crime scenes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this present systematic review paper, we have reviewed the vast area of print and electronic media which includes various research articles available in the online journals. We have also referred to the standard textbook of "*principles of hospital administration and planning*" by *BM Sakharkar*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIN

The NCRB report included a comprehensive analysis of a significant increase in recorded crimes targeting women, surging from 3,71,503 cases in 2020 to 4,45,256 cases in 2022.^[3] 'Crime against Women in India' encompasses instances of spousal and familial mistreatment, abductions, physical attacks, and sexual assaults. Amidst the concerning increase in crimes against women, experts emphasize the need of forensic nurse examiners who are the first point of contact in the hospital that provides care to the patient. Forensic Nursing has emerged as a specialist within the nursing industry to address the dynamic needs of victim care and the intricate legal framework. According to *BM Sakharkar* "*principles of hospital administration and planning (2nd edition)*", forensic nursing is a specialized field of nursing where nurses are involved in conducting sexual assault examinations and handling other legal matters related to mental, occupational, and public health. Forensic nursing is the utilization of medical knowledge and psychological understanding by registered nurses to investigate and treat trauma, death, violence, criminal activity, and accidents in clinical or community settings. Sexual violence inflicts significant physical and psychological trauma to women and children. While sexual violence mostly impacts women and girls, it is important to note that males are also vulnerable to child sexual abuse. A nurse is the individual who provides initial care to the injured person. To effectively address the challenging and constantly evolving requirements of giving care to victims and navigating our complex legal system, the nursing profession has had to develop a distinct

specialty known as Forensic nursing. The nursing roles within the criminal justice service are referred to by various names globally, such as Custody nursing, Prison/Correctional nursing, Immigration centre nursing, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) or Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE), SARTs (Sexual assault response team), SARCs (Sexual assault referral centre), and FNDIs (Forensic nurse death investigator).^[3]

Roles and Responsibilities of Forensic Nursing

Sexual Assault Cases: Rape is an abhorrent and atrocious violation of a woman's physical sanctity and dignity. The act breaches upon the victim's inherent entitlement as outlined in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which stipulates that "No individual shall be deprived of their life or personal freedom except in accordance with legally established procedures." It severely damages her physical and psychological health, causes intense emotional suffering, and puts her in a state of extreme emotional and physical deterioration. The offense of rape in India is regulated by the provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC), namely Sections 375 and 376. The colonial-era criminal law is inadequate in certain situations due to societal advancements. In order to enhance India's criminal justice system and safeguard women against sexual offenses, the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS, 2023)* was introduced. **Section 63** of BNS defines the term "Rape".

This is why the treatment of a rape survivor becomes increasingly critical and significant and here comes the role of forensic nurse examiner. Forensic nurses possess a distinct edge in such instances owing to their extensive and specialized training as sexual assault examiners. Forensic nurse examiners has specialized expertise in conducting sexual assault assessments and managing victims as the rape survivors deal with Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) which is form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).^[4] They are also involved as expert witnesses in a court of law. Upon receiving a basic education in forensic science. The sexual assault nurse examiner assumes the responsibility and professional duty to provide court testimony. Public prosecutors encourage the advancement of Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNEs) both domestically and internationally, seeing the forensic nurse as a very effective and influential witness in legal proceedings. The FNE is progressively supplanting gynaecologists and emergency physicians as sexual assault examiners in most parts of the United States, Canadian provinces, and many African nations.^[4] It is anticipated that the forensic nurse examiner will emerge as the preferred healthcare professional in India's health and justice systems too for managing sexual assault cases from a medical and legal perspective. The FNE is capable of conducting an immediate examination, as they will not have any other emergency duties that could interfere. They possess advanced expertise in forensic techniques, enhanced methods of specimen collection and preservation, and injury photo-documentation, leading to a higher rate of successful prosecutions of offenders.

Forensic Pathology: Forensic nurse examiners who work as forensic pathology associates can provide significant assistance to forensic pathologists during the dissection process by collecting biological and trace evidences. As they are the first ones to be in contact with the deceased, the forensic nurse is often tasked with handling vital paperwork pertaining to the deceased's presence in the mortuary,

including receiving the body and any relevant police documents. As a mortuary administrator, the forensic nurse examiner is also responsible for observing the postmortem staining and rigor mortis before artificially cooling the body, as well as ensuring the refrigerated storage units are kept at the right temperature for preservation or not. When the forensic pathologist arrives, they will compile all of the intake notes into a detailed report that covers the body's condition, any previous hospital stays or prehospital care, the police account of what happened, and the safety of any personal belongings that were with the deceased. To alleviate the pathologist's burden and enable them to focus on postmortem analyses with greater precision, a forensic nurse examiner can handle the many questions from grieving relatives.

Forensic Traumatology: As a forensic specialist who works with victims of trauma, the forensic nurse examiner is responsible for providing documentation of injuries through the use of photography, the collection of biological fluids, and the preservation of clothing that carries evidence of assault, among other things. In situations where the victim is a female and the trauma was either sexual or intimate, the forensic nurse may be of great assistance or assistance. There is a greater likelihood that a female nursing examiner will be able to create rapport with these victims, which will enable them to reveal the truth about their past in an honest manner.

Elder Abuse: Forensic nurses also have a crucial role in dealing with elder abuse. With the increasing aging population, the occurrence of elder abuse is escalating, and forensic nurses are leading the way in detecting and tackling this problem. They provide thorough assessments of older individuals who are alleged to have been subjected to abuse, neglect, or exploitation. These findings can be utilized to safeguard susceptible persons and ensure that perpetrators are held responsible for their actions. [3]

Member of legal team, i.e. assistants to attorneys: Given that the majority of prosecuted cases pertain to crimes committed against individuals, specifically including physical harm, forensic nurses who have obtained the necessary qualifications as Legal Nurse Consultants can make substantial contributions to criminal investigations. The Legal Nurse Consultant (FNE) is capable of examining and evaluating medical records. They can provide guidance to advocates in navigating complex medical terminology and surgical procedures that are not typically covered in law schools. The Legal Nurse Consultant (LNC) assists in formulating and crafting relevant questions for cross-examination and aids in identifying any gaps or omissions as recorded in the medical records. In addition, they stay updated on the most recent research in the healthcare and legal fields, which allows them to offer significant information relevant to the case.

Member of crime scene investigating team: As a member of the Investigating Team at the Crime Scene, the primary duty of the Forensic nurse examiners is to distinguish between fatalities caused by natural causes and deaths resulting from criminal activity, with the aim of minimizing the need for unnecessary post-mortem examinations. [6] The Forensic Medical Examiner (FME) can aid law enforcement officers in gathering trace and biological evidence at the crime scene, while providing explanations of initial medical findings and artifacts. The primary duties of the FNE involve ensuring the secure transfer of the deceased to the morgue, safeguarding

medical evidence, taking photographs of the body at the location, collecting information about the cause of death, and notifying the deceased's surviving family members

Criminal Abortion: When it comes to illegal abortion, forensic nurses can be the first to notice. Immediate reporting of incidents involving unlawful or self-inflicted abortions would help both the victims and society at large. The identification and prosecution of those responsible will save the lives of other victims.

Forensic Psychiatric Nursing: When individuals with mental illness are involved in criminal cases or when offenders pretend to be mentally ill, forensic psychiatric nurses play an essential role in addressing these instances. By monitoring certain signs associated with the offender's past, a forensic psychiatric nurse can conduct a thorough forensic evaluation in such circumstances. In addition, forensic psychiatric nurses assess the capability of detained suspects to stand trial, as mandated by the court. [7]

Forensic Toxicology: When dealing with poisoning situations, the trauma team should include forensic nurses who specialize in forensic toxicology. In poisoning cases, it is usual practice to throw out forensically important evidence, such as gastric lavage, vomitus, urine samples, feces, or clothing contaminated with any of the aforementioned. The importance of these specimens is recognized by forensic nurses, who carefully document all records and preserve them as needed for any court presentations.

CONCLUSION

Forensic science has significant potential for growth and development in India. Forensic nurses are essential in various areas of crime scene investigations, forensic psychiatry, forensic toxicology, forensic pathology, death inquiry, and correlational contexts. Forensic nursing is an emerging discipline within the profession of nursing that integrates aspects of law enforcement with healthcare. The lack of skilled forensic nurses in India necessitates the training of nurses employed in public health centres, psychiatric facilities, emergency care units, and operating theatres in fundamental principles of forensic science.

The benefits of forensic nursing are numerous, as it allows for independent professional practice and presents opportunities to broaden the scope of nursing to non-traditional environments. Forensic nursing is transitioning nurses from a supporting care role to a more independent practitioner role. It facilitates the provision of high-quality nursing care services to both victims and perpetrators of crime. It serves as a connection between the healthcare system and the legal system. The role of forensic nurses does not substitute or suppress any other forensic experts, but rather fills the gap in cases when there is a lack of skilled forensic services. Forensic nursing is becoming recognized for its significance in the courtroom as a dependable means of providing evidence. That is why there is a significant need to enhance forensic nursing education in the country due to the extensive opportunities available in this field. It is necessary to establish and execute graduate, postgraduate, and specialty programs similar to those found in industrialized countries.

REFERENCES

1. Sakharkar BM. Principles of Hospital Administration and Planning. 2004.
2. Cruse P. Florence Nightingale. Surgery. 1980 Sep 1;88(3):394-9.
3. Gorea RK, Lynch VA. Forensic nursing-a boon to the society.
4. Dash SK, Patel S, Chavali K. Forensic nursing–Global scenario and Indian perspective.
5. Sharma S, Joseph Jr J. The paradigm of forensic nursing for nursing aspirants in India: Promises, caveats & future directions. Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine. 2022 Feb 1;86:102321.
6. Renjith V, Nikitha S, George A, Mhalkar V, Raju NJ. Forensic nursing. Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology. 2016 Jul 1;10(2):180-3.
7. Singh RR, Bharti AK, Mittal R, Yadav PK. Forensic Nursing and Healthcare Investigations: A Systematic Review. International Medicine ISSN: 2667-7008. 2023 Nov 3;9(3).
8. Upreti D, Singh A, Sharma K. Scope and Challenges in Forensic Nursing Practice. International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods (IJARESM). 2021 Aug;9(8):2508-14.
9. Swami O. Various Scope and Challenges in Forensic Nursing in India.
