

Nursing Education 2016: Emergency Departments and the Victim of Sexual Assault-Kelsey Jeffries RN- Kaplan University

Kelsey Jeffries RN

Kaplan University, Davenport, Iowa USA

Introduction: Sexual assault is a serious concern that impacts all nations, generations, cultures, age groups, and genders and in order to care for these patients properly, emergency departments must have policies and guidelines clearly in place. Florence Nightingale's legacy of effective nursing was portrayed when caring for soldiers and the sick and dying. Historically, forensic nursing developed as an art of caring for survivors and offenders of interpersonal violence, crime, and sudden traumatic death. Before the forensic nurse evolved nurses provided care to victims and perpetrators of violence. In the 14th century, midwives performed gynecological examinations, collected evidence, and testified before the King's court. In the 1980s there was a need for nursing to care for victims of violence with specific handling of evidence. In 1985, the US surgeon general recognized violence as an emerging healthcare issue.

The purpose of this paper is to develop an educational plan for teaching emergency room nurses the critical steps in the identification and care of victims of sexual assault and to expose the gap analysis in the healthcare system in the care and treatment for victims of assault. Forensic nursing is a very critical link in the administration of justice and a significant resource for the multidisciplinary approach to caring for victims of violent crimes. In 1992 the International Association of Forensic Nurses was founded, led by Virginia Lynch and 70 registered nurses. Virginia Lynch was in a psychiatric education program when she chose the Tarrant County Rape Crisis program for her clinical practicum. After caring for sexual assault victims Virginia initiated the first rape crisis program, which became the first sexual assault nurse-training program in Fort Worth, Texas. According to Lynch, "violence and its associated trauma are widely rec-

ognized as a critical health problem in North America and throughout the world. Forensic nursing represents a new era in nursing practice that is evolving in direct response to the squeal of criminal and interpersonal violence"

Victims of violence may enter the healthcare system in primary care, community clinics, urgent care, or emergency departments. In this paper the target audience for the education of treatment for victims of sexual assault is intended for nurses and other healthcare professionals in the emergency department. A term used in this paper is sexual violence, which is a major health and human rights concern worldwide. Sexual violence is defined as any sexual activity in which consent has not been obtained or cannot be given freely. The term victim is often associated with the immediate trauma following an assault, and implies that a crime has been committed against an individual.

Evidenced based practice is the backbone behind the nursing profession and in health care in general, and it is imperative that the profession understands it. Evidenced based practice is "the integration of the best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values". Research utilization is using research based literature findings to support data collection, interventions, and evaluation in providing patient care. The ultimate goal of evidenced based nursing is to establish evidenced based data for practicing nurses in which to deliver high quality effective care based on the best and most current research. To be able to resolve problems while in the clinical setting, achieving superior patient care, surpassing quality assurance standards, and an ongoing commitment to change.

Improved Patient Outcomes: The area where

healthcare needs collide with the law is expanding, and forensic nurses have risen as leaders in the response to violence. Research and theory are key values that guide a safe, effective, and comprehensive forensic nursing practice and the profession continues to grow and evolve with more evidenced based research enhancing the care of victims. The rigorous research and critical theory analysis will aid in building the foundation for advances in the care of offenders and survivors of interpersonal violence, crime, and traumatic death. The International Association of Forensic Nurses seeks to advance the practice of forensic nursing, and incorporate forensic nursing science into basic and graduate nursing programs in Colleges and Universities around the globe.

Results:

The goal in this evidenced based practice project is to educate health care professionals on how to better treat and plan healthcare services for victims of sexual assault. The care for these patients is comprehensive and includes psychological support; evaluation of injuries; assistance with the collection of evidence; prophylaxis of sexually transmitted infections; prevention of pregnancy; education; and referrals for follow-up care. Patients of sexual assault rely on nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals to treat their physical injuries, provide resources and support for the severe emotional trauma they face, the difficult road to recovery, and to assist them in seeking justice and the prosecution of those that assaulted them.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (n.d.) states, that the first aspect of scholarship is discovery, which entails discovery of new knowl-

edge or confirmation of existing knowledge . It is a known fact that patients seek care in the emergency department setting after sexual assault. Discovery is generated through education, experience, evidenced based practice, and collaboration with other healthcare professionals . It is important and imperative that nurses in the emergency department receive education on the treatment of sexual assault victims, and have access to patient-centered and trauma-informed care that addresses their medicolegal and psychosocial needs.

Through integration, the second component of scholarship nurse educators make connections across disciplines, interpreting knowledge, and creating new understandings. The care of the victim of assault is comprehensive, and requires extensive planning, education, and expertise on the part of the emergency department providers and their collaborative partners. The emergency nurse plays a pivotal role in the coordination of care, collaborating with community-based victim advocates, social workers, and law enforcement personnel.

Through the scholarship of application and the four domains of discovery, integration, teaching, and application, nursing professionals are prompted to use theory and research to improve their nursing practice. Professional scholarship is imperative in nursing as nurses provide leadership in coordination of care in communities through education, experience, evidenced based practice, and collaboration with other healthcare professionals. Nursing professionals that engage in scholarly practice demonstrate clinical leadership through empowering others with the knowledge and skill to improve their practice.