

Forensic Nursing: A Subject of Need and Demand- A survey

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Abstract

With the advent of medical science, along with nursing activities, the scenario of health care delivery system is changing very quickly. As medicolegal problems are very much related to this on growing change, naturally the need of the subject is also to be modified. In view of this concept, the necessity of forensic nursing as a separate chapter has come up. The assessment of demand and requirement of this unfamiliar part of nursing course was the main motto of this study. The study or survey was conducted at a rural based area. Interesting facts have come up that show a definite pattern of concern of Forensic nursing among the nursing students.

Key words: Nursing activities, forensic nursing, course, Health care delivery system.

Introduction

Midwives -"Practicing autonomously, whether self employed or employed within National Health Service, requires the midwives to understand and use this knowledge to enhance, not inhibit, the delivery of safe care "- Dr. Robyn Phillips.(1) Before starting everything it is required to present few words on our institute located at central India and very much popular as a rural institute working sincerely in service for rural India.

Kasturba hospital has the unique distinction of being the only hospital started by the father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, in 1944. It had 15 beds for women and children at the start. In due course of time a course for Auxiliary Nerve Midwives was worked out and a concept of people's participation in their own health care among the rural masses was explored.

The Institute trains young doctors and nurses with a rural bias. Student nurses visit the villages along with the public health nurse and do home visiting during their training.(2)

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As per annual report 2007-08----"MGIMS, & KASTURBA HEALTH SOCIETY"

" Rural NGOS working with MGIMS- 103

" Inpatients in the year 40,244

Our country has the largest number of medical schools in the world. We produce almost 31000 doctors each year. Yet according to WHO, India has doctors, 8 nurses,5 midwives for every 10,000people, while approx upto 19 health workers for 10,000 people. For a country with over a billion people, the numbers are woefully inadequate- President Kasturba Health Society. (3)

In general, the term forensic medicine carries with it the connotation of death, homicide or murder. But, with the advent of medicine, crime and litigations, the field of forensic medicine could not be limited within a narrow territory and with extreme demand of society, the emerging sub discipline- "Clinical forensic Practice" has come out where naturally the role of nurse is of extreme value. In view of this, forensic nursing has been formed and it has been seen that it is not only the need of growing society associated to medical service, Forensic nursing is definitely a field of interest that must be considered with sincere view and wise thinking.

Any sub discipline of science that practices its specialty within the field of law could be

considered a branch of forensic science. Therefore as an emerging discipline forensic nursing could be said to assume an equivalence with other forensic sciences.⁽⁴⁾

Role of forensic nurse

A forensic nurse is in fact an example of innovative expansion of the role nurses can fulfill potentially in the scenario of public health, health care delivery system and public safety. Forensic nursing may provide praiseworthy contribution as they are "ideal professionals to interpret and correlate data from clinical records, laboratory results and autopsy findings. They are able to communicate with stressed physicians and beleaguered police and are able to challenge the already overwhelmed emergency department and crime laboratory personal with their findings or suspicions. They can give comfort and support to the emotionally traumatized victims of crime and their families". Michael M. Baden, MD,⁽⁵⁾ Director, Medico legal investigations unit, New York state police, as a whole, is duties of a forensic nurse can be categorized into four parts.⁽⁶⁾

1. Suspecting that violence has occurred,
2. Identifying and care of injuries,
3. Collecting evidence in a defective manner,
4. Crisis intervention with referral.

Aims and Objectives-

At every medical institute nurse are either related to nursing education systems or in direct touch with patients that includes emergency, trauma, drug associated complaints, psychiatry etc and with obvious connection, they always remain prone to face courts of law. But, very few nurses have proper conception on different medico legal out comes or interpretations. The American nurses association has recognized forensic nursing as a subspecialty since 1995⁽⁷⁾ and in 1997, the standards and scope of forensic nursing practice have been published. In India forensic nursing was first introduced to a few selected institutes in November 2003.

This study / survey has been conducted with three basic aims-

a. To know whether and how much knowledge on forensic nursing is there amongst

nurses un der study.

b. How demanding is this field amongst them.

c. To create at least initial part of curiosity in the minds of nurse during discussion on forensic nursing.

Material and Methods

This study was based on a questionnaire using questions related to forensic nursing / forensic medicine practice. It has been completed by trainee nurses and nursing students of four nursing institutes of district Wardha (Central India) in the state of Maharashtra.

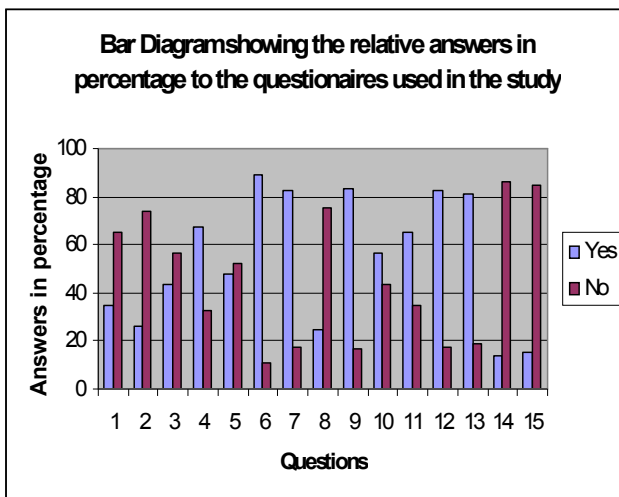
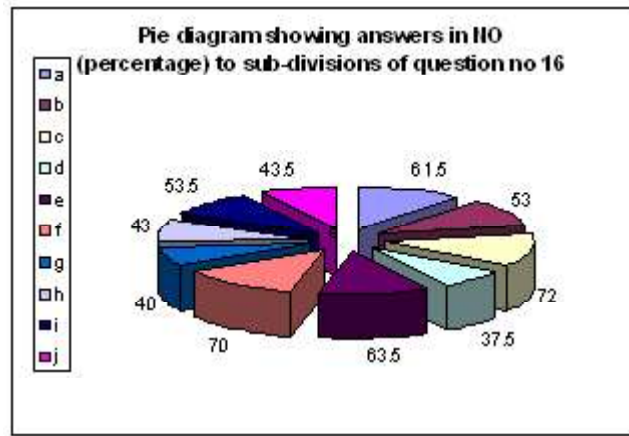
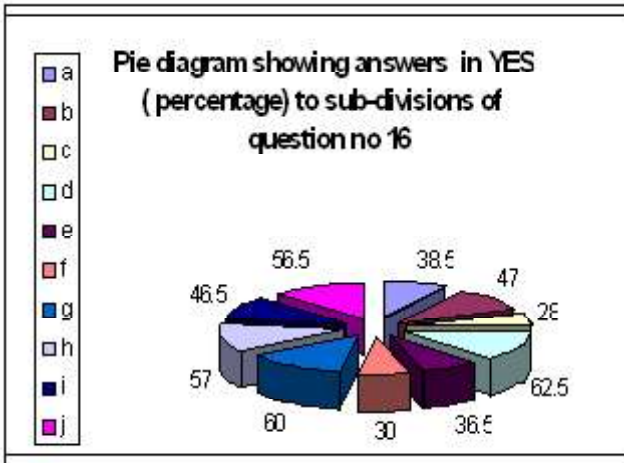
Questionnaire

1. Do you have knowledge of the term Forensic nursing?	Yes / No
2. Do you know what is role of Forensic nursing?	Yes / No
3. Do you know that medicolegal aspect is included at your course?	Yes / No
4. Should Legal medicine/ Forensic nursing be added at your course curriculum?	Yes / No
5. Do you know which portion of your field is related to medico legal works?	Yes / No
6. Do you feel that a separate book is extremely necessary for nurses to cover forensic aspect?	Yes / No
7. Should Forensic nursing be recognizes as a separate subject?	Yes / No
8. During your nursing works have you ever faced any medico legal problem?	Yes / No
9. Do you feel medico legal idea / Forensic nursing is at all necessary in day to day nursing work?	Yes / No
10. Have you ever felt helpless during work due to lack of proper medico legal knowledge?	Yes / No
11. Do you feel a working hand book on Forensic nursing is sufficient than a detail textbook practically?	Yes / No
12. Do you agree that training in forensic department is must to complete the nursing course?	Yes / No
13. Do you think that your idea on Forensic medicine may help society in several aspects?	Yes / No
14. Do you know the job oriented openings of Forensic nursing?	Yes / No
15. Do you know in which country Forensic nursing is considered as a separate subject?	Yes / No
16. Do you have knowledge of the following forensic issues----	Yes / No
a. Malpractice	Yes / No
b. Vicarious liability	Yes / No
c. Infanticide	Yes / No
d. Sexual assault	Yes / No
e. Indian penal code	Yes / No
f. How to face court of law	Yes / No
g. Duty and responsibility of nurse and patient	Yes / No
h. Consumer protection act	Yes / No
i. Primary duty for medico legal cases	Yes / No
j. Reporting of cases of mechanical injuries	Yes / No

Observations and Results

Table showing results of questionnaires asked in the study (No.200).

Question No.	Answer	
	Yes	No
	No. of subjects (%)	
1	69 (34.5)	131 (65.5)
2	52 (26)	148 (74)
3	87 (43.5)	113 (56.5)
4	135 (67.5)	65 (32.5)
5	95 (47.5)	105 (52.5)
6	178 (89)	22(11)
7	165 (82.5)	35 (17.5)
8	49 (24.5)	151 (75.5)
9	166 (83)	34 (17)
10	113 (56.5)	87(43.5)
11	130(65)	70 (35)
12	165 (82.5)	35 (17.5)
13	162 (81)	38 (19)
14	28 (14)	172 (86)
15	30 (15)	170 (85)
16 (a)	77 (38.5)	123 (61.5)
16 (b)	94 (47)	106 (53)
16 (c)	56 (28)	144 (72)
16 (d)	125 (62.5)	75 (37.5)
16 (e)	73 (36.5)	127 (63.50)
16 (f)	60 (30)	140 (70)
16 (g)	120 (60)	80 (40)
16 (h)	114 (57)	86 (43)
16 (i)	93 (46.5)	107 (53.5)
16 (j)	113 (56.5)	87 (43.5)



Discussion

Total 200 candidates (Nurses of 4 institutes) were questioned as per the format mentioned. All the candidates either had come from rural background or in direct touch with rural scenario. We should remember that majority of Indian population is rural oriented and crime/litigation associated to medical service are more or less same in urban and rural areas.

It is interesting, from the study we get that about 83% agree that forensic training is required for trainee nurse (Qn No. 12). While more or less half of them feel helpless (during work) due to lack of medico-legal knowledge properly, 81% of them agreed that forensic knowledge may help the society. About 68% wanted forensic nursing to be included in course curriculum and about 83% wanted forensic nursing as a separate subject and feel it is necessary in day to day nursing work.

From the above study, we can infer that though in day to day practice, nursing students, trainee

nurses are facing practical problems of society, mainly in health care delivery arena, most of the time they feel helpless with shallow medico-legal ideas that is extremely necessary in today's practice. This is also very much encouraging that majority of nursing professionals are not taking forensic nursing as a new burden on existing course curriculum and they are ready to consider the sub discipline with sincerity. The enthusiastic approach to know the subject in detail shows a real zeal and courage to face problems associated to law even that shows the requirement of a deep thought to implement such branches vividly at courses in near future. The application of nursing knowledge in a spreaded scenario is very much required especially for country like India where a major percent of population try to get nursing jobs at Middle East countries mainly.

We should remember that Forensic Nursing has been adopted as a nursing and public health subject in Edith Cowan University and University of Notre Dame of Western Australia, Mount Royal College and University of Calgary of Alberta. This stream has been considered with importance in British Columbia, Kaplan College, New York and Universities at Ohio and Oklahoma.

Conclusion

India is already traumatized by violence- crime and litigations. Any country with such huge population and difficulty in health care delivery system, more trained professional nurses must be there to counteract the affected scenario and here lies the immediate requirement to give a mind to make one forensic nurse, who at a time may become an extreme help for a medico or a tremendous support for a victim. A sincere

forensic nurse can be a best link between living forensic (clinical forensic medicine) and forensic after death of a deceased.

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- 2) Principal, Kasturba College of nursing, Sewagram, Maharashtra, India
- 3) Principal, Kasabai nursing school, Sewagram, Maharashtra, India
- 4) Dr.S.M.Haneef, President, Bharatiya Vikas Bahudesiya Sikshan & Prasikshan Samstha, Wardha. Maharashtra, India

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