



D40 The Greyhounds and Me: Stories of a Forensic Nurse

Constance A. Hoyt, MSN, RN, 73 Birch Meadow Road, Merrimac, MA; and Louise A. Gaucher, RN, First -Aid Station, 29 Beech Hill Avenue, Manchester, NH*

The goals of this presentation are (1) to examine some of the medico-legal issues that are present at a greyhound park and the necessity of proper nursing procedures and documentation to safeguard the corporation from civil and criminal issues, and (2) to recognize that the forensic nurse can capably carry out these functions.

The forensic nurse deals with clients and their significant others whose nursing problems bring them into actual or potential contact with the legal system. Among these clients are victims of interpersonal abuse and violence, victims of trauma, victims of drug abuse and misuse, those with undiagnosed health problems, those who fail to comply with their health care regimens, those involved in vehicular accidents, environmental hazards, and cases of sexual assault.

The following presentation represents a Greyhound racing park in New England, according to the State Pari-Mutuel Commission, where a registered nurse is required to be present whenever live racing occurs. A well-delineated job description does not exist for these nurses. But the nurse is given a well-equipped first-aid station that is located next to the security office and carries a walkie-talkie at all times. The site also hosts a well-known restaurant, bar stands, snack stands, and a banquet facility for hire.

Patron accidents and health issues as well as employee accidents or health problems are triaged, treated or referred to an Emergency Department when indicated. It is the duty of the nurse to collect evidence, document accident scenes, preserve evidence, and or institute what quality assurance measures are required to prevent further risk management for the corporation. This requires interfacing with administration, security, maintenance, and various liability carriers for patron liability, as well as Workman's Compensation. In fact, if proper reporting of Workman's Compensation cases is not made within 5 days the track owner is subject to fines.

It is sometimes difficult to convince non-medical personnel that "handing out an aspirin or giving someone Alka-Seltzer" may not be consistent with prudent medical practice in light of today's knowledge of adverse interactions. The bartender cannot be expected to discern which patron is on anticoagulant therapy or is subject to flash pulmonary edema, and administration officials must be convinced of that when they listen to the nurses' explanation of what O-T-C medications should or should not be available. One solution might be to shift the responsibility to the patron via the use of a coin-operated self-dispensing medication machine.

Similar to other tracks, heat exhaustion and collapse are common during the summer months with 90+ F. heat and 80%+ humidity. The differential diagnosis between adverse effects of environmental conditions and the patients' personal medical profile is a frequently encountered challenge, especially with the preponderance of Senior citizens frequenting the track. Assurance that the treated patron makes it safely home is another potential liability for the nurse and corporation.

Although altercations between patrons are infrequent, occasionally the local law enforcement officials need to be summoned; evidentiary data and documentation and photo documentation are critical to obtain at the time of the occasion. Preservation of this information is paramount for possible protection from possible legal action at a subse-quent date.

The nurse who works in the first aid station must have not only emergency nursing care experience which includes CPR, automatic defibrillator knowledge, and trauma nursing knowledge but also knowledge of current medications, their interactions, and adverse effects. At times the nurse performs as occupational health nurse. But at all times the nurse must have a sound knowledge of evidentiary recognition, collection, and preservation, and a sound understanding of proper medicolegal documentation. Only in this manner can the nurse help to safeguard the employer from unwarranted liability.

Forensic Nursing, Sports Track Medical Liabilities, Vendor's Considerations for First-Aid Care