



D20 Synergies of Practice: Clinical Forensic Nursing and Quality Management

Mary K. Sullivan, MSN*, Department of Veterans Affairs, 4553 East Buist Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85044; Janet Barber Duval, MSN, 9383 East County Road 500 South, Greensburg, IN 47240

After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to identify selected factors derived from an analysis of hospital sentinel events that justify a role for the clinical forensic nurse as an adjunct to the quality management system within a healthcare setting.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating research findings which validate that many of the adverse or sentinel events that occur within the hospital setting can often be prevented, recognized more readily and managed more efficiently utilizing the unique perspective and expertise of the clinical forensic nurse.

Cost savings will be realized by more timely apprehension and custody of perpetrators, reduced hospital financial liabilities associated with adverse events, and decreased risks to health and safety of hospital patients and workers who may be endangered by offenders.

This poster will present examples of how clinical forensic nursing personnel can directly contribute to the management of forensic cases within the hospital setting. Examples will illustrate the distinct value of nursing actions and thought processes of the clinical forensic nurse who is well indoctrinated within the realms of forensic science and hospital quality management.

Evidence identification, collection and preservation are vitally important to the escalating numbers of forensic investigations inherent within the health care systems. Urgent needs exist in emergency departments, clinics and in-patient areas where nurses are expected to recognize forensic implications within routine patient care scenarios and to possess the expertise to manage and secure the appropriate forensic evidence. The majority of law enforcement and investigative personnel are not trained to navigate a complicated hospital unit, nor do most comprehend the language and social structure within medical facilities. The clinical forensic nurse (CFN) is invaluable, as an interpreter of sentinel event details, serving both law enforcement and hospital administration that must conduct retrospective investigations as a component of their institution's risk management and quality assurance programs. Nurses who are facile in the forensic sciences and who maintain current knowledge of the legal and justice systems are invaluable resources for hospitals and have become the critical link between law enforcement and healthcare facilities.

Veterans Affairs, Office of the Inspector General, designed a feasibility study to determine synergies of practice between clinical quality management and forensic nursing. This study included 1,000 case reviews over an 11 year period of known adverse patient events. Forensic implications emerged prominently including patient abuse or neglect, suicide, assault, homicide, medication delivery system tampering, medication errors, and medical equipment or device tampering. Results showed that utilizing the vital link between forensic nursing and Quality Management may in itself greatly facilitate patient safety and reduce hospital liability. The early recognition of adverse events and prompt insertion of clinical forensic nursing expertise will minimize both time and resources typically expended for the investigation and resolution of these scenarios. In some instances, serial acts of perpetrators will be curtailed, thus saving lives and reducing further sentinel event occurrences.

The CFN, working in synergy with risk managers, performs essential functions to enhance safety within the hospital. The identification of forensic cases, preservation of evidentiary sources, and collaboration with law enforcement are vital elements of the overall investigation and root cause analyses of sentinel events. The CFN makes unique contributions that ultimately improve patient safety as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of quality management initiatives within a healthcare setting.

Synergy, Clinical Forensic Nursing, Quality Management