



### **D47 Development of a Forensic Nurse Examiner Training Program at a University Trauma Center**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of training forensic nurse examiners at a university trauma center.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the benefits to patients, law enforcement agencies, and the criminal justice system through the use of forensic nurse examiners in a university trauma center.

The goal of this presentation is to provide an overview of the development of a Forensic Nurse Examiner Training Program at a university trauma center to illustrate the unique contributions of the Forensic Nurse Examiner.

The Forensic Nurse Examiner Training Program is a component of the Clinical Forensic Medicine Program within the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Louisville Hospital. The program is comprised of registered nurses who have a broad range of experience and who also specialize in the care of sexual assault victims. With the 2005 requirement of JACHO, the hospital recognized the need for a team of trained healthcare professionals to address the forensic needs of crime victims that present to the trauma center. The program has expanded the knowledge and training of sexual assault nurse examiners by providing the forensic education necessary to attain the position of certified forensic nurse examiner. The program is funded under a contract with the Louisville Metro Police Department.

The program's goals are to provide victims of violent crimes with the highest level of medical and forensic care. The forensic nurse examiners advocate for victims of physical and sexual assault; recognize, document and preserve evidence on victims of assault or other violent crime; provide a specialized trained team of forensic practitioners to address the needs of injured victims of crime; provide clinical forensic training for hospital nurses and physicians; and offer an in-patient clinical forensic medicine consultation service.

The educational program addresses a wide variety of forensic topics including: forensic photography, documentation and interpretation of wounds, adult/adolescent sexual assault, suspect examinations, domestic violence, elder abuse and neglect, felonious assault and blunt force trauma, gunshot wounds, stabbings/sharp force injuries, motor vehicle trauma – driver vs. passenger, airbag induced injuries and hit and run pedestrian incidents, in-custody suicide attempts, police internal affair complaints and excited delirium.

Examinations are currently performed at the request of local, state, and federal law enforcement.

An example of a recent clinical forensic medicine consultation performed by a forensic nurse examiner will be presented.

**Case #1:** In July of 2009, two brothers were engaged in an argument, which escalated into the brothers drawing knives on each other. As a result, one of the brothers presented to the emergency department with a stab wound to the chest requiring a pericardial window. This brother stated he was an innocent victim did not admit to having possession of a knife during the altercation. The other brother, being less injured, was questioned, detained and arrested by the investigating domestic violence detective. The detained brother was adamant he was acting in self defense as the other brother came at him with two knives.

The forensic nurse examiner was called to document, evaluate, and interpret the injuries and wounds of both brothers. Examination of the chest wound revealed a vertically oriented single edged stab wound. The injuries to the brother who was detained at the police department revealed multiple superficial incised wounds that supported his statement that the other brother was in possession of a knife.

After the forensic nurse examiner carefully examined both brothers. The forensic nurse, after an examination of the wounds and the clothing, determined that the injuries sustained by the brother who was in custody were consistent with his statements and not consistent with the statements of the brother who said he was an innocent victim.

Based upon the interpretation of the wounds by the forensic nurse examiner, the detective released and dismissed charges against the brother in custody and filed lesser assault charges against the hospitalized brother.

The forensic nurse examiner is an asset to the community and law enforcement. With an accurate forensic analysis by a trained forensic nurse examiner, justice was served. All trauma centers should consider the establishment of a forensic nurse examiner program as a service to victims of violent crime.

**Nurse Examiner, Forensic, Training Program**