E22   Forensic Nurse Collaboration With the Legal Team

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The goals of this presentation are to: (1) explore the implications of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report for the future of forensic nursing specific to practice, education, and research; (2) explain how nurses can be full partners, collaborating with physicians and other forensic science professionals, in pursuing robust prevention pursuits to improve safety; (3) examine the commitment to moving the science forward; and, (4) outline advanced educational and training requirements for forensic nurses. The objective of this presentation is to outline the expertise of the advanced practice forensic nurse in collaborative roles within the legal system.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a basis for legal professionals to understand the expertise of advanced practice forensics within the legal system.

Regardless of the preparation level of the nurse, the goal of forensic education is to provide nurses who are knowledgeable in the care of all victims and perpetrators of violence and who are prepared to work in collaboration with professionals in the legal system. The advance practice forensic nurse has an educational background in psychiatric assessment and intervention skills, death investigation, forensic wound identification, evidence collection, family violence, sexual assault of all types and in varied populations, introductory law, and principles of criminal justice and forensic science.

Advanced forensic education for nurses prepares them to function in roles not held by nurses before. This is an emerging area of nursing practice and one that is in demand due to the increased incidence of violence within society, in general, and in the health care system, specifically. Among the roles of the advanced practice forensic nurse are that of the forensic nurse expert in the hospital or community setting who provides expertise across disciplines, risk manager, death investigator, nurse coroner, legal nurse consultant, death row mitigator, forensic psychiatric nurse, disaster nurse expert, corrections nurse, among others. These roles prepare nurses to provide expertise as nurse specialists in the courtroom as well as to serve as fact witnesses.

It is only with this advanced education that new roles emerge. In 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released an historic report, "*The Future of Nursing: leading change, advancing health.*" It was felt that improving health and healthcare for Americans could not be done without the nursing profession. The focused outcome was to be an initiative regarding the Future of Nursing. The committee developed four key messages:

- Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.
- Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States.
- Effective workforce planning and policy making require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure.

It is this advanced education that prepares forensic nurses to collaborate with professionals within the legal system. Forensic nurses function as experts, fact witnesses, consultants, death row mitigators, nurse lawyers, and in general, serve to connect the health care community with the legal system in serving both victims and perpetrators.

Collaboration, Forensic Nurse, Roles