




Community Updates

Stirring the Forensic Nursing Pot in South Africa

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Abstract

This is a brief summary of forensic nursing in South Africa and the development of a forensic nursing specialization.

Keywords: forensic nursing, nursing practice, specialization

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Violence and crime in the South African society is alive and well. The country has one of the highest femicide rates with approximately seven women killed by their intimate partners on daily basis (Abrahams 2022). The crime statistics for the fourth quarter of 2023 indicate that 190,973 people reported contact crime (South African Police Statistics 2023). The real number of people affected and injured by violence and crime however remains elusive. Many of the victims of violence and crime seek healthcare but the healthcare professionals are not well equipped to care for the forensic patient population. The need for the training and education of forensic nurses in South Africa has been affirmed as a high priority by the National Department of Health.

Forensic nursing was announced as a nursing speciality by the South African Nursing Council in 2014 followed by the publication of Forensic Nursing Competencies. Nursing education institutions have been slow in the development and uptake of forensic nursing as a speciality. Brave forensic nursing pioneers have laid foundations for forensic nursing in the South African context but face many challenges within the existing educational and legislative frameworks. Forensic nursing has many faces and frontiers in the international community and the roles and responsibilities of forensic nurses in the context of South Africa are developing. In 2023 my journey with the Academy of Forensic Nursing and the Forensic Nursing Certification Board started with

benchmarking the competencies as set out by the South African Nursing Council. The guidance and support from the Forensic Nursing Certification Board has been instrumental in navigating practice and curriculum aspects. A workgroup made up of academics from different universities was set up for national collaboration with the intention of learning from the wisdom and experience of representatives from the Forensic Nursing Certification Board. Developing a new qualification (licensure) is not an easy or fast process but we are making progress. The most precious lesson I have learned is that trauma-informed care is not limited to patients but must be incorporated into all engagements among the multi-disciplinary multi-sectoral teams responsible for providing care and services to medical forensic patients.

References

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