



Community Updates

International Forensic Nursing Activities

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A number of our AFN members have given us updates through the International Special Interest Group (SIG) and emails. We would like to share those with you. We'd love to hear from you and what you are doing in your country. We have learned so much from other countries about similarities and differences in practice and how they are able to influence care for trauma clients in their area. A key function of the SIG is also to help support those nurses in countries without forensic nursing or in areas where forensic nurses have not yet been actively involved. These position statements have arisen from a realization with the war between Israel/Hamas that nurses in this as well as other conflict/disaster areas may feel isolated and not supported. The International SIG hopes to provide a vehicle to support them. One of the initiatives that resulted was to begin work on new position statements on the forensic nursing role in war and conflict, as well as in disasters and health emergencies. AFN members will see these in the new year for feedback and further suggestions. Members have also been able to reach out to support each other with references, contacts, and resources to support initiatives.

United Kingdom

The UK Association of Forensic Nurses and Paramedics includes forensic nurses and paramedics in sexual assault centres and custody settings. There is a new law in England/Wales/Northern Ireland that all sexual assault centres must be accredited by 2025 to ensure they meet ISO 151-89 international standards UKAS (UK accreditation service for laboratories). It is not changing how "sexual offense examiners" examine clients but addresses challenges re: buildings, control of modules, kits, training competencies of staff, forensic security of DNA/evidence, verification of colposcopy images, injury databases, etc. The Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine is guiding terminology standardization. The custody examiners (those working with police/corrections) will be next but are under a different authority.

France

Forensic nurses in France held their first forensic nursing congress this year.

Switzerland

The Swiss Association of Forensic Nursing held its third annual forensic nursing forum in May 2024. There is a strong forensic nursing education program available which nurses from other European countries also take (e.g. Germany). There are some changes in the role of forensic nurses and how the role functions and they are currently navigating their way.

Brazil

Dr. Lucilene Cardoso reported that the III International Congress of Forensic Nursing (CIEF) was held by the Brazilian Society of Forensic Nursing (SOBEF) in partnership with

renowned universities in Brazil. It is the largest scientific event in the field of Forensic Nursing in Brazil and in 2024 the III CIEF was held from November 6–8, at the Federal University of Brasilia, in the Federal District, the country’s capital. The central theme was “Connecting professionals, strengthening practice and broadening horizons” and brought together renowned specialists from the United States and Brazilian researchers, as well as students and professionals from different areas, including those working in forensic nursing. The main thematic areas of the congress were: Forensic Nursing in the Civil and Criminal Sectors; Violence and Vulnerability; Education in Forensic Nursing; Forensic Nursing and the Preservation of Traces; Ethical and Legal Aspects of Forensic Nursing; Human Trafficking and Humanitarian Disasters; Systematization in Forensic Nursing; Psychiatric Aspects in Relation to Violence; working with the indigenous population; catastrophes and mass casualties; and forensic nursing in situations of sexual and guideline violence. A number of collaborators took part from the U.S. including: Dr. David Williams and Dr. Joyce Williams; Ms. Liana Hill; Ms. Sarah Sharp; and Ms. Isle Polonko.

The “Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner–SANE Nursing Brasil” was also held: a 40-hour theoretical-practical course for training Brazilian professionals with GTAs in a partnership between SOBEF, the University of Brasilia and Crisis Services of North Alabama in the person of Liana Hill (MSc, RN, RSCN, SANE-A, SANE-P, and Forensic Nurse Program Director), following the standards of the American Nurse Credentialing Center (ANCC) and international regulations for the training and practice of forensic nursing.

Canada

The Canadian Forensic Nurses’ Association has advocated for and gotten approval for a Canadian Forensic Nursing certification. This recognition of forensic nursing as a specialty has been sought after for a long time and the first applicants will be assessed in 2025.

Nurses in eastern Canada (Nova Scotia) are expanding their services beyond sexual assaulted clients to also respond to those experiencing intimate partner violence. They have been receiving province-wide training and have updated protocols.

The Canadian government has been pushing for increased availability of sexual assault services, especially in rural areas. There are many northern areas where there are sparse populations, few opportunities for SANEs to practice, and often only one physician or nurse practitioner in the hospital or outpost, limiting their time to care for the client. It often means clients are turned away or transported to a town/city hours away, apart from family and supports. Instead, some communities are implementing alternate models to provide care. One being used by the Canadian Military and a number of provinces is a collaborative model developed by Dr. Cathy Carter-Snell, called the [Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services \(EESAS\)](#). The nurses obtain the consent, history and interview, conducts the head-to-toe exam and body evidence using a trauma-informed approach. The physician/nurse practitioner then conducts the genital exam, prescribes medications and orders diagnostics.

Please let us know what is happening with forensic nursing in your country either by emailing the co-chairs of the International SIG or joining our meetings. The co-chairs are Dr. Cathy (CJ) Carter-Snell (ccartersnell@afnmail.org) and Dr. Kimberly Kasper (kasperk@afnmail.org). We meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 11 a.m. EST (4 p.m. UK, 5 p.m. Europe). Please contact us if you wish to be added to the calendar invitations and receive the Google Meet link.