

A Study to Assess the Knowledge of Nursing Professionals Regarding Forensic Nursing Practices

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Abstract

Introduction: The specialist field of forensic nursing combines nursing science with legal and forensic concepts. Patients involved in medico-legal matters, such as victims of violence, abuse, accidents, poisoning, and sexual assault, are often seen by nursing staff. Sufficient understanding of forensic nursing procedures is necessary for accurate evaluation, preservation of evidence, recordkeeping, and legal reporting. The purpose of this study was to evaluate nursing professionals' understanding of forensic nursing procedures.

Methodology: A quantitative descriptive survey design was utilized for the investigation. The study was conducted among 150 nursing professionals working at selected hospitals in Bihar. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to choose the participants. Data were collected using a structured knowledge questionnaire consisting of 40 multiple-choice questions pertaining to forensic nursing techniques. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that 22% of nursing professionals had inadequate knowledge, 56% had moderately adequate knowledge, and 22% had adequate knowledge regarding forensic nursing practices. The mean knowledge score was 24.68 ± 5.82 . Significant associations were found between knowledge scores and educational qualification, years of experience, and previous forensic nursing training ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: According to the study's findings, most nurses had a reasonably sufficient understanding of forensic nursing procedures.

Keywords: Forensic Nursing, Nursing Professionals, Knowledge, Medico-Legal Responsibilities, Evidence Preservation, Legal Documentation.

INTRODUCTION

Combining nursing practice with forensic science and the legal system, forensic nursing is a new specialty. ¹ The field focuses on treating people who have experienced traumatic events, abuse, violence, criminal activity, and medico-legal issues. When it

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comes to patient evaluation, gathering evidence, recording injuries, and filing legal reports, forensic nurses are essential.²

Patients who have been victims of burns, poisoning, assaults, domestic violence, sexual abuse, accidents, and other medico-legal situations are regularly seen in healthcare settings.³ When dealing with such individuals, nurses are frequently the first medical personnel to do so. Their acts, paperwork, and observations can have a big impact on court decisions and legal investigations.⁴

In order to bridge the gap between medical services and legal obligations, the idea of forensic nursing was developed.⁵ It highlights how crucial it is to preserve the integrity of the evidence while giving patients compassionate care. Identifying indicators of abuse, maintaining tangible evidence, accurately recording injuries, and working with law enforcement are all part of forensic nursing practice.⁶

One of the most crucial elements of forensic nursing is accurate documentation.⁷ Precise documentations of the patient's medical history, physical examination, course of therapy, and observable injuries could be important pieces of evidence in court. Both patient care and legal investigations may be jeopardized by incomplete or incorrect documentation.⁸

Another important duty of nurses involved in medico-legal situations is the preservation of evidence.⁹ To avoid contamination or evidence loss, biological specimens, clothing, photos, and descriptions of injuries must be handled in accordance with established protocols. To carry out these duties successfully, nurses need to possess the necessary knowledge and abilities.¹⁰

In India, people are becoming more conscious of abuse, aggression, and legal responsibility in the medical field.¹¹ As a result, the need for forensic nursing skills has grown. However, formal teaching on forensic nursing is scarce in undergraduate nursing curriculum, and forensic nursing is still an underdeveloped specialty in many healthcare organizations.¹²

Legal responsibilities such as informed consent, confidentiality, reporting requirements, chain of custody protocols, and medico-legal paperwork are expected of nursing practitioners.¹³ Lack of knowledge in these areas can have a detrimental impact on patient outcomes and cause legal issues.⁸

Numerous studies have shown that nurses and nursing students lack sufficient understanding of forensic nursing.¹⁴ It has been demonstrated that forensic nursing knowledge and competencies can be enhanced by educational interventions, workshops, continuing nursing education programs, and specialized training.¹⁵

To determine educational needs and improve nursing competence, it is crucial to evaluate nursing professionals' understanding of forensic nursing procedures. In order to evaluate nursing professionals' understanding of forensic nursing procedures, the current study was conducted.¹⁶

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the knowledge of nursing professionals regarding forensic nursing practices.
2. To determine the level of knowledge regarding evidence preservation, documentation, and medico-legal responsibilities.
3. To identify areas requiring educational improvement.
4. To determine the association between knowledge scores and selected demographic variables.

HYPOTHESES

H₁ : there will be a significant association between knowledge scores and selected demographic variables.

H₂ : Nursing professionals who have received forensic nursing training will demonstrate significantly higher knowledge scores than those without training.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach:

Quantitative research approach.

Research Design:

Descriptive survey design.

Setting:

Selected hospitals of Bihar.

Population:

Nursing professionals working in selected hospitals.

Sample Size:

150 nursing professionals.

Sampling Technique:

non-probability convenience sampling.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Registered nursing professionals.
- Nursing professionals willing to participate.
- Professionals working in hospitals during the data collection period.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Nursing interns and students.
- Professionals absent during data collection.

Research Tool

Section A:

Demographic Variables

- Age
- Gender
- Educational qualification
- Years of experience
- Department
- Previous forensic nursing training

Section B:

Structured Knowledge Questionnaire 40 multiple-choice questions covering:

- Introduction to forensic nursing
- Medico-legal responsibilities
- Documentation practices
- Evidence preservation
- Chain of custody
- Sexual assault management
- Abuse identification
- Legal reporting procedures

Scoring Pattern

0–13 = Inadequate Knowledge

14–26 = Moderately Adequate Knowledge

27–40 = Adequate Knowledge

Validity:

Validated by seven experts from forensic medicine, nursing education, and medico-legal services.

Reliability:

Split-half reliability coefficient = 0.88.

Pilot Study:

Conducted among 15 nursing professionals not included in the final sample.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission was obtained from hospital authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Written informed consent was obtained before data collection. The structured questionnaire was administered individually. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

Ethical Considerations

- Ethical clearance obtained.
- Written informed consent obtained.
- Confidentiality maintained.
- Voluntary participation ensured.

RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of Nursing Professionals According to Knowledge Level

Knowledge Level | Frequency | Percentage

Inadequate | 33 | 22%

Moderately Adequate | 84 | 56%

Adequate | 33 | 22%

Table 2: Mean Knowledge Score

Variable | Mean | SD

Knowledge Score | 24.68 | 5.82

Table 3: Association Between Knowledge and Previous Training

Training Status | Mean Score

Received Training | 28.12

No Training | 21.45

Chi-square = 9.34

$p < 0.05$

MAJOR FINDINGS

- 56% demonstrated moderately adequate knowledge.
- 22% demonstrated adequate knowledge.
- 22% demonstrated inadequate knowledge.

- Nursing professionals who had received forensic nursing training achieved higher knowledge scores.
- Significant associations were observed between knowledge scores and educational qualification, experience, and training status.

DISCUSSION

According to the current study, most nursing professionals had a relatively adequate understanding of forensic nursing procedures. These results are in line with other research that found working nurses have little formal training in forensic nursing.

Significantly higher knowledge scores were shown by those who had received forensic nursing training. This result emphasizes the value of specialized training programs and ongoing nursing education.

Particularly in the areas of evidence preservation and chain of custody protocols, deficiencies were identified. Previous research has shown similar results, highlighting the need for improved forensic nursing education.

The study is in favor of incorporating forensic nursing concepts into professional development programs and nursing curriculum.

CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, nurses had a somewhat sufficient understanding of forensic nursing procedures. To increase knowledge and professional competency, educational interventions and specific forensic nursing training programs are required. Patient care, evidence preservation, and legal accountability can all be improved by bolstering forensic nursing education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continuing nursing education programmes on forensic nursing should be conducted regularly.
2. Forensic nursing concepts should be integrated into nursing curricula.
3. Workshops and simulation-based training programmes should be organized.
4. Similar studies may be conducted with larger sample sizes.
5. Comparative studies between different healthcare institutions are recommended.

6. Periodic competency assessments should be implemented.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None

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