Forensic Nurses Week Recognizes Important Work in the Field

The International Association of Forensic Nurses organizes the week, held annually the second week in November, to recognize the contributions and commitments forensic nurses make and highlight the significant work they perform.

LOCALCITY, ST. (Nov. 10, 2014) The {Insert Organization/Community} joins in the celebration of Forensic Nurses week, along with the International Association of Forensic Nurses—a nursing association representing more than 3,300 registered nurses and other professionals in 22 countries—organizes Forensic Nurses Week to celebrate the accomplishments and dedication of professionals in the field as well as raise awareness about the importance of their work.

In {Name of Community}, {Name of Nurse} is being recognized for his/her work providing exceptional patient care.

Forensic Nurses Week, celebrated this year from Nov. 10 to 14, has a theme of “Leadership. Care. Expertise.” The week is celebrated internationally though awareness events in local communities and education efforts to teach colleagues about the forensic nursing practice. Forensic nurses all over the world wear lilac (the designated color of forensic nursing) to mark the week.

“This week is so important because awareness of the specialized knowledge and skills of a forensic nurse can increase access to care for those individuals who have forensic needs as well as health care needs,” said Sheila Early, RN, BScN, board president (and the first Canadian to hold the volunteer position). “Creating awareness of forensic nursing services within the health care world can only lead to better public awareness and access.”

According to the association, health care consumers are becoming more aware of the value of having skilled caregivers to meet their forensic needs in life and in death—but there is still a long way to go because many people are not familiar with the forensic nursing specialty and its role in victim care and the criminal process.
Forensic nurses provide specialized care for patients who are victims and/or suspects who have experienced injury (both intentional and unintentional). These healthcare professionals are nurses first, but have knowledge of the legal system and expertise in forensic science. After meeting a patient’s medical and psychosocial needs, a forensic nurse often collects evidence, provides medical testimony in court, and consults with legal authorities.

“We are not the first group of helping professionals that come to mind when people think about violence,” said Jennifer Meyer, BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, volunteer board president of the International Association of Forensic Nurses Foundation. Typically, they think of law enforcement, advocates or even prosecutors. However, at every step of the way—from reporting the crime to the courtroom—a forensic nurse is there. We provide hands-on care the moment a patient presents to our hospitals and clinics. We are present as they report to law enforcement and we are present to testify in cases that go through the justice system. The public deserves to know more about us and how to access our care.”

Raising this level of awareness is an important aspect of Forensic Nurses Week.

Forensic nurses use their advanced education and training to provide nursing care, collect evidence and provide consultation in a variety of areas including: sexual assault, intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, death investigation, elder mistreatment, corrections, emergency services, mass disasters, psychiatric mental health and public health.

LATEST NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION

The International Association of Forensic Nurses is proud to announce that it was awarded a grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). The new project will assist OVW to develop a “National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations: Juveniles.” The goal is to include national, state, local and tribal experts throughout the country who work with child victims of sexual assault and collaborate with these experts to determine the best practices for delivering care to children who have been sexually assaulted. The process, utilizing a multidisciplinary Advisory Committee, will include a detailed examination of current standards and any existing protocols in the care of child victims of sexual assault, and will culminate in the creation of a protocol specifically for the pre-pubertal victim. The association and its members played an active role in the development of the “National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations: Adult/Adolescent” in the original version published in 2004 as well as the update to the Protocol in 2013.

In addition, the association and its partner, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, have been working on the sustainability of SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners) programs. This collaborative project focused on the sustainability and growth of SANE programs, and just launched the SANE Program Sustainability app in the iTunes store Oct. 20. The mobile app offers key information about how to grow and sustain healthy SANE Programs including staffing and leadership, collaboration, assessment and evaluation, funding, program expansion, and pediatrics.
THE ASSOCIATION AT A GLANCE

With more than 3,300 members from 22 countries, the International Association of Forensic Nurses has a mission to provide leadership in forensic nursing practice by developing, promoting, and disseminating information internationally about forensic nursing science. Victims of violence and abuse require care from a health professional who is trained to treat the trauma associated with the wrong that has been done to them—be it sexual assault, intimate partner violence, neglect, or other forms of intentional injury. Forensic nurses are also a critical resource for anti-violence efforts. They collect evidence and give testimony that can be used in a court of law to apprehend or prosecute perpetrators who commit violent and abusive acts. By hiring and training forensic nurses, communities supply themselves with a vital link to the administration of justice. The association also offers certification for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in both Adult/Adolescent (SANE-A) and Pediatric (SANE-P) patient care. For more information, visit www.ForensicNurses.org.

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