



E77 Forensic Nurses in Institutes of Forensic Medicine: An Evaluation of the Zurich Integration Model

*Valeria Hofer**, University of Zurich, Zuerich CH-8057, SWITZERLAND; *Michael Thali, MD*, Universitat Zurich, Zurich CH-8057, SWITZERLAND; *Rosa M. Martinez, MD*, Universitat Zurich, Zurich CH-8057, SWITZERLAND

Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will have a deeper understanding of a specific role of forensic nurses in the institutes of forensic medicine. It is proposed that a similar model may be worth implementing at other forensic medicine institutes globally.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing the added value a forensic nurse brings to the table in terms of documentation and sampling. Forensic investigation, both in the dead and living, is an ever-evolving and growing field, requiring expertise at many levels.

Since the autumn of 2016, the Institute of Forensic Medicine at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, has employed a nurse (Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education), who is also a university graduate in Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) forensic nursing.

An increased demand for qualified personnel in forensic health care has existed over the past years. As a result, the implementation and application of forensic nursing science is in the pioneering stages at institutes of forensic medicine in Switzerland, and this development has been very exciting thus far. The Institute of Forensic Medicine in Zurich was the first institution in German-speaking parts of Europe to employ and integrate a forensic nurse in daily forensic medicine practice. Accordingly, other institutes of forensic medicine in Switzerland followed this trend and are developing specific training and educational programs for nurses.

After the first year of having a forensic nurse on-site at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Zürich, the outcomes were evaluated in order to examine: (1) the current situation in terms of service delivery, and (2) the status of practical integration of the forensic nurse employed at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Zurich. A questionnaire was designed to rate the value of forensic nursing in terms of clinical and postmortem forensic work in the opinion of doctors working in the field. The forensic nurse played an active role in assisting doctors with documentation, photography, obtaining and securing blood, urine, and hair samples of suspects or victims, and negotiation with clinical personnel at medical facilities. The forensic nurse was also utilized at large-scale police checkpoints, where motor vehicle drivers were screened for their fitness and ability to drive, among other forensic tasks. The results conformed to a double hump curve, with two peaks: one with a high and one with a low rating. These findings correlated strongly with the level of exposure to forensic nursing assistance, in the sense that the doctors who regularly attended cases with the forensic nurse were generally more positive about the experience, whereas some forensic medical practitioners who rated forensic nursing negatively had not ventured to conduct case work alongside the forensic nurse in order to directly observe and experience the possibilities of this new inter-professional cooperation. One interpretation has been that the doctors who did not wish to utilize the support of a forensic nurse had been overly influenced to be entirely self-sufficient. The doctors who actively integrated with the forensic nursing service also reported an increase in acquiring practical forensic skills, resulting in a win-win situation.

In conclusion, evaluation of the contribution of forensic nursing to service delivery at an institute of forensic medicine in Switzerland one year after implementation of the service revealed that integration of a forensic nurse into the field of forensic medicine, albeit a complex task, holds great promise.

Forensic Nursing, Institutes of Forensic Medicine, Evaluation