

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Forensic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice*

REFERENCE: Hammer RM, Moynihan B, Pagliaro EM. *Forensic nursing: a handbook for practice*. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2006.

REFERENCE: Lynch VA, Duval JB. *Forensic nursing*. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Mosby, 2006.

REFERENCE: Pyrek KM. *Forensic nursing*. Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.

Two thousand and six has been a good year for the field of forensic nursing as the first three textbooks on this topic were released. Virginia Lynch, long considered the “mother” of forensic nursing, Kelly Pyrek, a journalist/editor, and Rita Hammer, Barbara Moynihan, and Elaine Pagliaro, forensic nursing faculty at Quinnipiac University and a crime lab director, respectively, have all made significant contributions to the literature. Each of these books could be used as the required text for one, or several, forensic nursing courses at the undergraduate or graduate level. Pyrek’s book is exceptionally good reading with her journalistic flair and historic detail. Hammer et al.’s book serves as a practical handbook that should be part of every practicing nurse’s library. Lynch’s book is an edited compilation of research, literature reviews, guidelines, and descriptions of specific areas of practice by experts in the field. She also provides a comprehensive list of color illustrations of specific evidence.

According to the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN), “Forensic nursing is the application of nursing science to public or legal proceedings; the application of the forensic aspects of health care combined with the bio-psycho-social education of the registered nurse in the scientific investigation and treatment of trauma and/or death of victims and perpetrators of abuse, violence, criminal activity and traumatic accidents” (1). The American Academy of Forensic Science (AAFS) recognized forensic nursing as a scientific discipline in 1991 and accepts nurses with forensic experience and baccalaureate or higher degrees as members. The number of academic programs in Forensic Nursing is increasing and gaining visibility. The American Nurses Association (ANA) adopted the Forensic Nursing Standards and Scope of Practice (2) in 1997. According to IAFN, there are currently 11 master’s degree programs, one doctoral program, and 10 certifi-

cate programs offered in forensic nursing in North America (two in Canada), with nine of these available online. In addition, many universities and colleges are offering elective courses in forensic nursing or specialization in forensics within an advanced practice-nursing program.

Hammer, Moynihan, and Pagliaro divide 27 chapters into the following five parts: foundations, populations, practical aspects of forensic nursing, specialized forensic nursing roles, and concepts for the twenty-first century. Theirs is a traditional textbook format covering legal and ethical issues, historical perspectives, cultural considerations, and policy implications. The authors also adeptly provide very practical guidelines and tools along with theory and philosophy. This book is well suited for an undergraduate nursing course, or for practitioners who find that the legal issues in their current practice exceed their initial education. This text is also an essential resource for emergency rooms, public health programs, violence prevention/intervention, and correctional facilities. Primary research studies are not referenced as often as in the other two books; however, the references are comprehensive, current, and appropriate for an introductory text.

Virginia Lynch’s book has been in process for many years, collecting an impressive array of experts writing on topics as diverse as female genital mutilation, autoerotic fatalities, mass graves and exhumation, violence in the healthcare workplace, and organ donation. The strengths of this text include a well-researched global perspective and a traditional color photographic index of physical evidence collection. This book organizes 57 chapters into eight units that cover the field of forensic nursing as well as forensic science principles and techniques, death investigation, legal issues, and interpersonal violence. Each chapter references primary research studies, provides additional illustrative examples, and inserts case studies on the concepts presented. The publishers provide highlighted key points, best practices, sample forms, procedures, protocols, and tables of relevant data and

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statistics in each chapter. Lynch's text is useful as a reference for criminalists and it will make a well-researched addition to the library of any medico-legal discipline.

Kelly Pyrek's text is set apart in the following ways; first, it is not an edited collection of chapters; it is entirely written and researched by the author; second, Ms. Pyrek is not a nurse; she is a journalist who is editor in chief of a division of health care journals, including *Forensic Nurse*, an online journal, and *Forensic Focus* magazine; and third, her book includes lengthy quotes and interviews with experts in the field interspersed with case studies. There are 17 chapters, several of which are similar to the other two texts; however, Pyrek uses more of a journalistic approach than the traditional textbook. Chapters unique to this book are sexual violence in the military and on campus. Her book provides exceptional depth to each topic, for example, the chapter titled Vulnerable Populations has 15 subtopics including violence against disabled individuals, lesbian, gay, transgendered and bisexual individuals, elders, and children. She further subdivides each topic into detailed sections, for example, the section on children includes shaken baby syndrome, Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, burn injuries, risk factors, sexual abuse of children, offender pro-

filing, children who witness violence, and societal consequences of child abuse and neglect. At the end of each chapter, she provides between 200 and 300 references and over 150 recommended readings. However, her referencing is not the usual scholarly style that allows the reader to locate the actual source of the quote. There are some misrepresented citations and many quotes from personal conversations that are difficult to verify. This text makes for exceptionally interesting reading and I recommend it for both academic and public libraries.

As a group, the three texts certainly enrich the field of forensic nursing and add credibility to our status as a scientific discipline. Nursing educators will find the choice of texts particularly useful as we offer more academic programs, courses, specialization, and continuing education in forensic nursing.

References

1. International Association of Forensic Nurses; <http://iafn.org/about/about-Home.cfm>.
2. International Association of Forensic Nurses. Scope and standards of forensic nursing practice. Washington, DC: American Nurses Publishing, 1997.