OP-16: First ever Forensic Nursing Facility in Sri Lanka: experiences and way forward

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Introduction: A Forensic Nursing Facility primarily provides care to victims of crime. The scope of the forensic nurse varies worldwide, with greater responsibilities in some jurisdictions and limited in others. The Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Faculty of Medicine (DFMT), Colombo, which services five suburban police areas, introduced the first ever forensic nursing facility in Sri Lanka in 2018. The role of the Forensic Nursing Officer (FNO) was to facilitate the medicolegal management of victims of crime especially victims of sexual and gender-based violence and child abuse. The FNO develops a rapport with the victim, explains the procedures, obtains informed consent, chaperones and assists the victim during the entire examination procedure with a compassionate, case sensitive manner in order to create a victim-friendly environment and to prevent retraumatization and secondary victimisation. This study presents the experience, its impact, limitations and recommendations for further development of the Forensic Nursing Facility.

Methods: Victim satisfaction surveys conducted by the DFMT before and after introduction of this facility were reviewed and compared.

Results: On comparison between 'pre FNO introduction' (n=59) and 'post-forensic nurse introduction' (n=20), victims 'relieved after SAFE' increased from 33.9% (pre-FNO) to 65% (post-FNO) examinations (p=0.015). The task of audio-recording the medico-legal narrative by the specialists in Forensic Medicine has been facilitated by the presence of the FNO especially in child victims where age-appropriate communication is required. Victim review and follow-up was another unique feature that was introduced through this facility. Further training and guidance was needed in injury recording and injury interpretation in both clinical and autopsy medico-legal work.

Conclusions: FNO has enhanced the victim satisfaction following medicolegal examinations, especially in sexual assaults. However, unlike in other jurisdictions, further training and experience is needed before the FNO could be given greater responsibilities regarding clinical observations, deeper clinical interpretations or providing expert evidence in courts.

Keywords: forensic nursing facility, medico legal service, forensic nursing officer, victim satisfaction survey, case sensitive manner