Abstract

Background and Purpose:

Most forensic nurse examiners (FNE) express feelings of anxiety related to providing witness testimony, despite the rigorous judicial training that is required to become a FNE. The purpose of this evidence-based quality improvement project was to develop, implement, and evaluate an online educational module that reduces or eliminates the anxiety of providing witness testimony for forensic nurse examiners.

Methods:

The project comprised a single-group pre/post-test study design implemented with a forensic nurse examiners team at a major U.S city Magnet® hospital. Participants included a convenience sample of 14 practicing FNEs. The intervention was an online education module. The Court Related Stress Scale (CRSS-R) was administered as the pre- and post- intervention survey to assess FNEs' anxiety related to providing witness testimony.

Results:

A total of 12 participants who met inclusion criteria for FNEs were recruited. All 12 participants completed the pre- and post-intervention survey. Pre-intervention survey scores were compared to post-intervention survey scores using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test. A clinically and statistically significant reduction in FNE anxiety related to providing trial testimony was observed.

Conclusions:

Findings suggest that having additional education to reduce FNE anxiety related to trial testimony has a clinically and statistically significant impact on forensic nurse examiners and

their preparation for trial, and should be sustainably accessible to all FNEs, particularly those subpoenaed for expert or factual witness testimony.

Implications:

The findings of the project contribute to the advancement of the forensic nursing specialty by adding to the body of evidence-based resources that addresses the emotional wellness of FNEs. This project highlights the importance of providing advanced education to prevent forensic nurse anxiety associated with providing witness testimony and may be valuable for future projects that focus on FNE burnout, retention, and continued education.

Keywords: forensic nurse examiner, sexual assault nurse examiner, anxiety, witness testimony, continuous education