Advanced Education to Prevent Forensic Nurse Anxiety Associated with Providing Witness Testimony: A Quality Improvement Project

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**Introduction**

Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE) is a specialized field that requires extensive training in the fundamentals of forensic science, genitourinary exams, victimology, and court testimony. FNEs provide medical care for victims of domestic abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, and sexual crimes; then collect and secure the evidence of said crime for transfer to law enforcement. Having performed the forensic exam, the FNE must then be prepared to provide factual or expert witness testimony which educates a jury (and judge) about the exam that he or she has performed. However, when surveyed, most forensic nurses rate their witness testimonies as “emotionally unnerving” despite the trial preparation training and rigorous hands-on exam hours required to become a forensic nurse examiner.

**Purpose & Aims**

The purpose of this evidence-based quality improvement project is to develop, implement, and evaluate an educational module that reduces or eliminates the anxiety of providing witness testimony for forensic nurse examiners.

The two aims of this project are to:

1. Produce a user friendly and sustainable online education module.
2. Reduced forensic nurse examiner’s anxiety related to providing witness testimony by implementing a best practice educational module.

**Methods**

Online education module composed 3 evidence-based themes noted in the literature review

- **Design:** single-group pre-post test intervention design
- **Sample:** 14 practicing forensic nurse examiners (FNEs) unit of inner-city hospital
- **Measures:** Court Related Stress Scale -Revised (CRSS-R) tool. 10 question : 0 = no anxiety, 30 = most severe anxiety
- **Analysis:** Wilcoxon Signed Rank test

**Results**

- Using a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, pre-module CRSS-R scores were high with a median score of 25.0 (5.22 SD). At post-module CRSS-R scores were low with a median score of 16.5 (4.75 SD). Participant scores decreased overall from pre to post-module.
- The p-value was found to be $p = 0.002$. At the 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$)
- Aims met were statistically significant & Clinically significant

**Conclusion**

- Contributes to the advancement of the forensic nursing discipline by adding to its body of evidence-based resources
- Reducing FNE anxiety also decreases acquittal rates of the accused
- Increases FNE confidence, promoting retention and job satisfaction
- Provides an outline for those seeking to evaluate forensic nurse anxiety related to witness testimony and demonstrates a structure approach to implementing an education module to reduce/prevent said anxiety.