

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FORENSIC NURSING SCIENCE AND PRACTICE: LESSONS LEARNT

Jeanette M. Sebaeng

North West University
Jeany.Sebaeng@nwu.ac.za

Sinegugu E. Duma

University of Cape Town

BACKGROUND

The International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) held an international conference from 29 September to 2 October 2016 on Forensic Nursing Science and Practice. The conference took place in Denver, Colorado, United States (US), and lasted for four days. The purpose of the conference was to help launch state-of-the-art science into action and to create best practices for forensic nursing across the world and across the lifespan. The conference brought together 900 delegates from all corners of the globe, including experts from criminal justice, nurse scientists, nurse educators, researchers, multidisciplinary partners as well as forensic nurses. There were also academics, scholars and international individuals involved in forensic nursing related matters.

The main objectives of the conference were to:

- Apply knowledge of forensic nursing care across the lifespan
- Identify resources for supporting forensic nursing care across the lifespan
- Recognise sources of knowledge for evidence-based practices
- Compare and contrast innovative forensic nursing practice skills and strategies
- Support the advancement of global forensic nursing practices



After a welcome speech by the IAFN President, Dolores Krebs, the conference started with close to 100 topics cascaded into different parallel sessions and six workshops. Highlights and special events of the conference included awards ceremonies, business meetings, welcoming new members, poster presentations as well as silent auctions. Keynote presentations were delivered on the following topics:

- Expert Witness Testimony in Sex Trafficking: A Forensic Nursing Perspective – Sharon Cooper, MD FAAP
- Children in a Digital Age – Lt Joe Laramie
- Violence, Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction in the Emergency Department – Darcy Copeland, PhD
- Now You See It, Now You Don't: Identifying Human Trafficking in Health Care System – Ann Janette Alejano-Steele, PhD

Lessons learnt

The most interesting experience, especially for candidates from South Africa, was the fact that forensic nursing exists and is extremely viable in developed countries. This gave us more confidence, stamina and resilience to believe that it will also happen in our country. The conference covered a variety of sessions and forensic nursing topics which were very informative and very real, even in our home country.

A workshop on human trafficking aimed at enabling practitioners to look beneath the surface when managing their clients. There is a distinct differentiation between trafficking and smuggling. The types of human trafficking and victims' dynamics were highlighted. Another topic of interest was credential development for forensic nurses – certification and regulation. The thoroughness of the process enables getting the right people into forensic nursing. Another topic was a comprehensive forensic screening tool for identifying victims of violence in the emergency department setting. This tool may come in handy in our casualty departments, given the increased rate of violent crimes in South Africa.

Acknowledgements

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