

FORENSIC EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Forensic issues span a multitude of patient presentations surrounding trauma and violence. The safeguarding of evidentiary materials is a component of emergency nursing practice. The emergency nurse identifies the need for forensic evidence collection and preservation. These procedures are a part of the scientific investigation, analysis, prevention and treatment of trauma and/or death related medical-legal issues. The emergency nurse caring for a patient having suffered an act of violence is responsible for accurate documentation and being prepared to testify as a witness during court proceedings. The emergency nurse also may be requested to function as an expert witness in medical-legal investigations, including depositions and courtroom testimony.

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that:

1. The emergency nurse provides physical and emotional care to patients, and also helps preserve the evidentiary material collected in the emergency department.
2. The emergency nurse collaborates with emergency physicians, social service, and law enforcement personnel to develop guidelines for forensic evidence collection, preservation and documentation in the emergency care setting.
3. The emergency nurse is familiar with the concepts and skills of evidence collection, written and photographic documentation, as well as testifying in legal proceedings.

Resources

Ferrell, J. J. (2007). Forensic aspects of emergency nursing. In K. S. Hoyt & J. Selfridge-Thomas (Eds.), *Emergency nursing core curriculum* (6th ed., pp. 1025-1032). St Louis, MO: Saunders.

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