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**Implementing a Forensic Educational Package for
Registered Nurses in Two Emergency Departments in
Western Australia**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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(nee Vecchi)

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2008

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ABSTRACT

The results of violence are a major public health problem that infiltrates hospital emergency departments (ED) daily. Often, ED nurses are the first healthcare professionals to see patients, speak with family members, handle personal property and collect laboratory specimens. Such actions can be of extreme importance to the 27 different categories of forensic patients. To adequately address forensic patient issues, ED nurses need exposure to forensic education.

The aim of this research was to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a clinical forensic education package on ED nurses' perceptions, knowledge and care of forensic patients. To accomplish this aim, this descriptive research study employed a multiple triangulation methodology design. Additionally, theoretical guidance was sought from Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory, Malcolm Knowles (1980) Adult Learning Principles and Lynch's (1990) forensic nursing integrated practice model. Forty nine treatment and control group nursing participants were recruited from two metropolitan Western Australian hospitals. In addition, 22 forensic and hospital stakeholders from 10 specialty areas were interviewed to explore and identify key forensic issues that confront Western Australian healthcare and forensic professionals.

Data was obtained from qualitative and quantitative means which included; semi-structured interviews, policy manual reviews, audits of nursing documentation, pre and post-test questionnaires, focus group interviews, and the researcher's observations. Data analysis indicated that the forensic educational package significantly increased participant's forensic nursing knowledge by 23.8%. In addition, data indicated that treatment group participants altered their documentation and clinical practices as a result of attending the forensic intervention workshops.

The study results suggest that a nurse focused approach can be an effective strategy to address the complex issues violence brings into the healthcare system by improving forensic knowledge, influencing nursing practice, and altering participant

perceptions regarding forensic patient care. Moreover, this study identified gaps in the amount and variety of available forensic educational material for nurses. As a result, a clinical forensic nursing self directed learning package was developed which aimed at fulfilling general forensic educational needs for all Registered Nurses across Australia and International settings.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This doctoral thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the doctoral thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Christine Marie Michel

December 12, 2007

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I will pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness which I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again.

Pledge of Etienne de Greliet (1773 – 1855)