

Clinical Forensics: Bridging Healthcare and Justice in the 21st Century

Flavia Beccia*

Department of health and forensic science, Graz University of Technology Austria

Abstract

Clinical forensics is a multidisciplinary field that integrates clinical healthcare with forensic science and criminal justice. It involves the application of medical knowledge to the investigation of criminal cases, particularly in instances of trauma, abuse, or death. Clinical forensic professionals, including forensic nurses, physicians, and pathologists, play a crucial role in the documentation, collection, and analysis of evidence, which can be used in criminal investigations and legal proceedings. These professionals are trained to identify signs of injury, conduct forensic examinations, and provide expert testimony in court. Clinical forensics serves not only to aid in the identification of perpetrators but also to ensure that victims receive appropriate medical care while maintaining the integrity of evidence for judicial processes. The collaboration between healthcare and legal systems in clinical forensics is essential in ensuring justice and safeguarding public health.

Keywords: Clinical Forensics, Forensic Medicine, Forensic Pathology, Forensic Nursing, Evidence Collection

Introduction

Clinical forensics is a growing field that addresses the intersection of medicine, law, and criminal justice. It encompasses the work of healthcare professionals who are trained to provide medical assessments and care to victims of crimes, while simultaneously assisting law enforcement by gathering and preserving crucial forensic evidence. The primary goal of clinical forensics is to ensure that victims receive appropriate medical care while also contributing to the investigation and prosecution of criminal activities [1].

The role of clinical forensic professionals is vital in cases involving assault, abuse, homicide, and other violent crimes. They conduct medical exams, collect physical evidence, and provide expert testimony in court, all while adhering to strict ethical and legal standards.

Roles and Responsibilities in Clinical Forensics

1. Forensic Nurses

Forensic nurses are healthcare professionals trained to provide care to individuals who have experienced trauma or violence, such as sexual assault or domestic abuse. They are also responsible for collecting forensic evidence, including biological samples and injury documentation, that may be critical to investigations. Forensic nurses, particularly Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), are often called upon to conduct comprehensive forensic examinations and to testify in court as expert witnesses [2-4].

2. Forensic Pathologists

Forensic pathologists are medical doctors specializing in the investigation of causes of death. They perform autopsies to determine the cause of death, whether it resulted from natural causes, accidental injury, suicide, or homicide. Forensic pathologists play a key role in criminal investigations, especially in cases of suspicious or unexplained deaths.

3. Forensic Physicians

Forensic physicians are healthcare professionals who assess and examine individuals involved in criminal cases, such as suspects, victims, and witnesses. They may conduct fitness-to-stand-trial assessments, examine injuries, and provide expert opinions on medical

issues related to the case.

4. Medicolegal Investigators

Medicolegal investigators work closely with law enforcement to investigate deaths, injuries, and cases of abuse. They may assist in gathering evidence from crime scenes, interviewing witnesses, and preparing reports that detail findings relevant to criminal investigations.

Key Areas in Clinical Forensics

1. Trauma and Injury Assessment

One of the primary areas of focus in clinical forensics is trauma and injury assessment. Healthcare professionals trained in clinical forensics are experts in identifying and documenting physical injuries that may be indicative of abuse, assault, or violence. The accurate assessment and documentation of these injuries are vital in establishing a timeline of events, corroborating victim testimonies, and linking injuries to potential perpetrators [5].

2. Death Investigations

In cases of unexplained or suspicious deaths, clinical forensic professionals, particularly forensic pathologists, conduct thorough investigations to determine the cause and manner of death. This often involves performing autopsies, toxicological analysis, and reviewing medical records. The findings of these investigations can provide crucial evidence in cases of homicide or accidental death.

3. Evidence Collection and Preservation

Forensic healthcare professionals play a central role in the collection

*Corresponding author: Flavia Beccia, Department of health and forensic science, Graz University of Technology Austria. E-mail-id: Beccia.flavia@gmail.com

Received: 04-Dec-2024, Manuscript No: gnfs-24-156226; **Editor assigned:** 07-Dec-2024, Pre QC No. gnfs-24-156226 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 21-Dec-2024, QC No. gnfs-24-156226; **Revised:** 25-Dec-2024, Manuscript No. gnfs-24-156226 (R); **Published:** 30-Dec-2024, DOI: 10.4172/2572-0899.1000306

Citation: Flavia B (2024) Clinical Forensics: Bridging Healthcare and Justice in the 21st Century. Glob J Nurs Forensic Stud, 8: 306.

Copyright: © 2024 Flavia B. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

and preservation of evidence. This includes biological samples (such as blood, semen, or saliva), trace evidence (such as hair or fibers), and physical evidence from injuries. Proper handling and documentation of evidence are essential to ensure it is admissible in court.

4. Victim Advocacy and Support

Clinical forensics also extends to victim advocacy, providing support and care for individuals who have experienced trauma. Healthcare professionals in this field are trained to provide trauma-informed care, offering not only medical treatment but also emotional and psychological support to victims of violence and abuse. By offering compassionate care, clinical forensic professionals help victims navigate the legal system and recover from their experiences [6].

Training and Education in Clinical Forensics

Clinical forensics is a specialized field that requires additional education and training beyond standard healthcare practice. Healthcare professionals who work in clinical forensics typically undergo specialized courses and certifications that prepare them for the complexities of medico legal work.

Forensic Nursing Certification: Nurses can obtain certification in forensic nursing, including specialized training in sexual assault examinations, evidence collection, and trauma care.

Forensic Pathology Fellowships: Forensic pathologists' complete fellowships in forensic pathology, which include training in autopsy procedures, toxicology, and death investigation techniques.

Medicolegal Investigation Training: Some healthcare professionals pursue training in medico legal investigations, which prepares them to assist in both medical and legal aspects of criminal investigations [7-10].

Conclusion

Clinical forensics plays a critical role in both healthcare and the criminal justice system. By combining medical expertise with forensic science, clinical forensics ensures that evidence is accurately collected, documented, and preserved while also providing vital care and support

to victims. As the field continues to evolve, the collaboration between healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and the legal system remains essential in ensuring justice, enhancing patient care, and preventing future crimes.

The contributions of forensic nurses, pathologists, and other clinical forensic professionals help bridge the gap between healthcare and the justice system, ensuring that both the physical and emotional needs of victims are met while safeguarding the integrity of evidence for legal proceedings.

References

1. Martin K (2011) Electronic overload: The impact of excessive screen use on child and adolescent health and wellbeing. Perth, Western Australia: Dep Sport Recreat.
2. Lucena JM, Cheng LA, Cavalcante TL, Silva VA, Farias Junior JC (2015) Prevalence of excessive screen time and associated factors in adolescents]. *Revista paulista de pediatria: orgao oficial da Sociedade de Pidiatria de Sao Paulo* 33: 407-414.
3. Carson V, Pickett W, Janssen I (2011) Screen time and risk behaviours in 10 to 16-year-old Canadian youth. *Preventive Medicine* 52: 99-103.
4. Rideout VJ, Foehr UG, Roberts DF (2010) Generation M Media in the Lives of 8-to 18-Year-Olds. Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation.
5. Granich J, Rosenberg M, Knuiman MW, Timperio A (2011) Individual, social and physical environment factors associated with electronic media use among children: sedentary behavior at home. *J Phys Act Health* 8: 613.
6. Rey-Lopez JP, Vicente-Rodriguez G, Ortega FB (2010) Sedentary patterns and media availability in European adolescents: The HELENA study. *Prev Med* 51: 50-55.
7. Wang C, Li K, Kim M, Lee S, Seo D-C (2019) Association between psychological distress and elevated use of electronic devices among US adolescents: Results from the youth risk behavior surveillance 2009-2017. *Addictive Behaviors* 90:112-118.
8. Strasburger VC, Hogan MJ, Mulligan DA (2013) Children adolescents, and the media. *Pediatrics* 132:958-961.
9. Lobel A, Granic I, Stone LL, Engels RC (2014) Associations between children's video game playing and psychosocial health: information from both parent and child reports. *Cyber psychology, Beh Social Net* 17:639-643.
10. Mathers M, Canterford L, Olds T, Hesketh K, Ridley K et al. (2009) Electronic media use and adolescent health and well-being: cross-sectional community study. *Academic Pediatrics* 9: 307-314.