

**D. STAFFORD
& ASSOCIATES**

**Understanding the Sexual Assault
Medical Forensic Examination**

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Objectives

- 1 Discuss care options for victims of sexual assault
- 2 Describe the sexual assault medical forensic examination
- 3 Discuss patient-centered care for victims of sexual assault

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Reporting Options

- ▶ Medical exam
- ▶ Medical forensic exam with reporting to law enforcement
- ▶ Medical forensic exam without reporting to law enforcement

* Except in jurisdictions where sexual assault is a mandatory reporting event, the decision to report should be left up to the patient.

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Non-Reporting Options (Blind, Anonymous)



**INFORMED
CONSENT
PROS AND CONS OF
CHOICES**

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Patient-Centered Care

- Medicine takes precedence over forensics
- Tailoring the medical forensic exam
- Patient privacy and confidentiality
- Advocacy and support throughout process

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Adapting Exam Process To Address Unique Needs

- ▶ Gender and/or perceived identity
- ▶ Disability
- ▶ Language needs
- ▶ Ethnic & cultural beliefs
- ▶ Sexual orientation
- ▶ Past history of abuse
- ▶ Assault by an authority figure
- ▶ Involved in self-blaming activities before assault

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What services are available in your community?

- ▶ Sexual assault nurse examiner/forensic nurse program
- ▶ Emergency department
- ▶ Student health
- ▶ Other health care providers

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SANE/Forensic Nurse

▶ A sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) is a registered nurse who has received specialized education in the care of patients following a sexual assault.

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Sexual Assault/Forensic Medical Exam

- ▶ Crisis intervention
- ▶ Gathering a history
- ▶ Physical examination
- ▶ Medicolegal specimen collection
- ▶ Photography
- ▶ Pregnancy/STD prevention & testing
- ▶ Medicolegal documentation
- ▶ Discharge and safety planning

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Crisis Intervention

Short- and Long-Term Trauma Informed Care

- ▶ Advocates
- ▶ Hospital accompaniment
- ▶ Trauma-informed counseling

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Medical-Forensic History

- ▶ Past medical history
- ▶ History of events
 - Potential sources of evidence
- ▶ Safety assessment



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Medical-Forensic History versus Law Enforcement Interview

A forensic history is to develop a diagnosis and plan of care for the patient.

A law enforcement interview is to determine if a crime was committed.

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Physical Assessment

- ▶ Assess for findings & injuries
- ▶ Potential evidence
 - ❑ Body fluids
 - ❑ Hair
 - ❑ Trace evidence
 - ❑ Clothing
- ▶ Medical specimens for pregnancy & STD testing & treatment
- ▶ Chain of custody drug screens

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Medicolegal specimen collection

- ▶ Dependent on:
 - ❑ Time frame for collection
 - *72 - 120 hours
 - ❑ Type of assault
 - ❑ Consent
 - ❑ Report to law enforcement vs. blind reporting

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Preserving Evidence in Cases of Sexual Assault

It is important to encourage the patient *not* to do the following:

- ▶ Drink
- ▶ Eat
- ▶ Shower
- ▶ Change clothing
- ▶ Smoke or chew gum
- ▶ Use the bathroom and wash their hands

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Evidence Collection

- ▶ DNA standards
- ▶ Hair
- ▶ Trace evidence
- ▶ Biological fluids
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Tampons/pads



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Potential Evidence

- ▶ Blood
- ▶ Semen
- ▶ Saliva
- ▶ Hair
- ▶ Epithelial cells
- ▶ Foreign materials (i.e. fibers, fingernail scrapings)
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Injuries
 - ❑ Genital
 - ❑ Nongenital

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Special Care In Cases of Strangulation

- ▶ Forensic medical history
- ▶ Ask about the first, last and worst
- ▶ Photography (8 views of neck)
- ▶ Assess mouth/lips
- ▶ Chain of custody blood and urine drug screen
- ▶ Touch DNA swab of neck
- ▶ Neck circumference
- ▶ Hands on mannequin (with pics)
- ▶ Fingernail scrapings

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Signs and Symptoms


- ▶ Scratch marks, fingernail marks
- ▶ Petechia- found above the point of applied pressure
- ▶ Lip abrasions where lips are pushed against teeth
- ▶ Chest Pain
- ▶ SOB
- ▶ LOC or Memory Loss
- ▶ Change in vision/hearing
- ▶ Red linear ligature marks or bruising
- ▶ Light-headed/headache
- ▶ Fainting/unconsciousness
- ▶ Loss control of bodily functions
- ▶ Oxygen deprivation = symptoms of ETOH, Drugs and Psychosis

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Alternative/Adjunct Techniques & Tools

- ▶ Light sources (UV light)
- ▶ Colposcopy
- ▶ Speculum
- ▶ Toluidine blue dye
- ▶ Foley cath & Q-tip technique



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What substances may react under UV light?

Body fluids


Detergents and lotions

Chemicals

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Toluidine Blue Dye



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Speculum



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Colposcope



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Foley & Swab

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Will a drug screen automatically be collected and is there a difference between a chain of custody drug screen and a hospital drug screen?

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Alcohol & Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault

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- ▶ Indications for testing
 - ❑ Symptoms (memory loss, severe intoxication, drowsiness, dizziness)
 - ❑ Patient reports or suspects being drugged
- ▶ Obtain consent from patient
- ▶ Collect samples as soon as possible

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Evidence Myths & Mistakes

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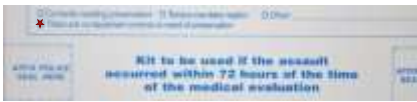
- ▶ She's showered so you won't find evidence
- ▶ The clothes have been washed already
- ▶ It happened too long ago so a forensic exam won't matter
- ▶ I told her to go to her regular doctor for the exam
- ▶ The hospital will test her for alcohol that's good enough

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Does my kit need to be refrigerated?

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Medicolegal Documentation

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- ▶ Written report
- ▶ Diagrams
- ▶ Photographs
- ▶ Genital
- ▶ Non-genital



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Discharge and Safety Planning

- ▶ Medications
 - ❑ STD prophylaxis
 - ❑ Emergency contraception
 - ❑ HIV NPEP
- ▶ Follow-up
 - ❑ Forensic evaluation
 - ❑ Medical care
- ▶ Safety planning



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Suspect Kit



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Ask yourself these question?

911 is called by a female saying her roommate thinks she was sexually assaulted last night. The caller reports they were all really drunk and had been bar hopping.

- ▶ What should be done first?
- ▶ What should not be done?
- ▶ Do the appropriate people know what to do and how to do it without delay?
- ▶ Would the right thing happen every single time?



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Coordinated Community Response

- ▶ Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)
 - ❑ Work as a team and promote a systematic response
 - ❑ Forum to discuss and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each team member
 - ❑ Method to establish and review guidelines for the response to victims of sexual assault
 - ❑ Evaluate strength & weakness of response



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Resources

- ▶ End Violence Against Women International
 - ❑ www.evawintl.org
- ▶ National Institutes of Health
 - ❑ www.nih.gov
- ▶ International Association Of Forensic Nurses (IAFN)
 - ❑ www.iafn.org
- ▶ United States Department of Justice
 - ❑ www.justice.gov
- ▶ NCJRS
 - ❑ www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ovw/241903.pdf
 - ❑ A National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations



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