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Living in the Presence of Forensic Medicine: Science and Professionalism for the Establishment of Justice "The Forensic Medicine Service of Bejaia is a Model

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Abstract:

We present to the reader an aspect of coordination and integration with security agencies and justice authorities, in which the role of forensic medicine as a partner in building its edifice is evident. This aspect is represented by caring for living victims of physical and sexual violence. The Biology Unit operates as a forensic and pedagogical unit in the actual care of victims. The forensic doctor describes the injuries, indicating their severity, and then determines the duration of total disability, enabling the competent authorities to adapt the case. During this program, medical students at various stages of their progression are trained through practical lessons, the outcomes of which are evident in two aspects: the first is examination and monitoring, and the second is training and follow-up, to provide judicial authorities with scientific evidence to prove the guilt of the offender and thus establish justice.

Key words: Forensic medicine, modesty unit, pedagogical training, victims of violence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Forensic medicine: At the very beginning of the 19th century, Mahon defined forensic medicine as "the art of applying the knowledge and precepts of medicine to different questions of law, in order to clarify or interpret them appropriately." [1] Forensic medicine, as an independent science, collaborates with the justice system in uncovering scientific or criminal evidence, a path to truth and a pressing requirement for the judiciary. The following are examples of coordination and integration with the justice system, demonstrating the role of forensic medicine as a partner in building its edifice. This aspect is embodied in the care of living victims of violence, with hundreds of victims referred to forensic medicine departments for examination, an examination of the nature of wounds and injuries, and a determination of total incapacity for work. This enables the competent authorities to classify the case as a violation, a misdemeanor, or a crime.

2. DEFINITIONS:

The Forensic Medicine Service is a public medical service located within public health institutions. It cares for victims of physical violence, both living and deceased, through forensic medical examinations and autopsies. Forensic medicine services located in university hospitals are responsible for the training and pedagogical supervision of medical students. They consist of medical and pedagogical units, such as the Biology Unit of the Forensic Medicine Service at the University Hospital of Bejaia, which performs forensic medical examinations, expertise, and assessment of bodily harm. It also provides pedagogical education and training for medical students at all levels. (Figure 1)

2.1. Forensic Medical Examinations: *(Figure 2)*

Cases of Assault and Injury: These are conducted upon the request of the adult victim or the guardian of the minor victim, or upon direct request from the security agencies in charge of investigating the case, such as the police or the National Gendarmerie. In the form of a request for assistance, an order to a doctor, or the assistance of an expert. Living victims, who have been subjected to intentional assault and injury, or unintentional injury in traffic or work accidents, should present themselves to the Forensic Medicine Service, bringing with them medical certificates, analyses, and X-rays. A file is opened for each victim, and their statements are recorded

Sexual Assault Cases: The Forensic Medicine Department's Biology Unit receives victims of sexual assault, both men and women, of all ages, at the request of judicial authorities, the police, and the National Gendarmerie. The assistance request is reviewed and the mission is understood. The victim and their guardians are then received in a calm atmosphere, respecting privacy (minors, people with disabilities, and vulnerable groups). A psychologist and social worker are also available to accompany the examination and inspection process. The victim is informed of the nature of the task and the stages of the examination, so that they can consent to the examination. This includes examining the signs of wounds and injuries on the body and in sensitive areas such as the vulva and anus. Additional tests are performed if necessary, in coordination with the relevant services. These include blood or urine tests or taking internal sperm samples. Medical care for the victim is provided to protect them from sexually transmitted diseases. The forensic doctor respects the victim's refusal to undergo the examination, but must notify the authorities in writing. This examination is culminated in a forensic medical report, which is delivered to the victim or to the relevant authorities in a sealed

envelope. Psychological support continues with a psychologist depending on the development and stability of the case. Experts and assessment of bodily harm: These are civil, criminal, or social expertise received from judicial authorities (court, council, prosecution, etc.). The victim presents the report to the forensic medicine department, accompanied by a court ruling or an order appointing an expert, who will examine and determine the disability or impairment as required by the task.

2.2. Education and Pedagogical Training

Among the responsibilities of university hospital forensic medicine services is the training of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Medical students receive theoretical training in forensic medicine, which is then continued at the service through practical applications in the presence of victims. During these trainings, they learn how to care for victims of physical and sexual violence, while respecting professional ethics and standards, and how to interact with relevant authorities in a manner that promotes justice and serves citizens. Resident doctors specializing in forensic medicine receive four years of training in the fields of forensic medicine, medical law and ethics, autopsy, toxicology, histology, genetics, and anatomical anthropology. The same service receives and accompanies law and biology students, as well as nursing graduates, in their understanding of forensic medicine and the development of dissertations and theses.

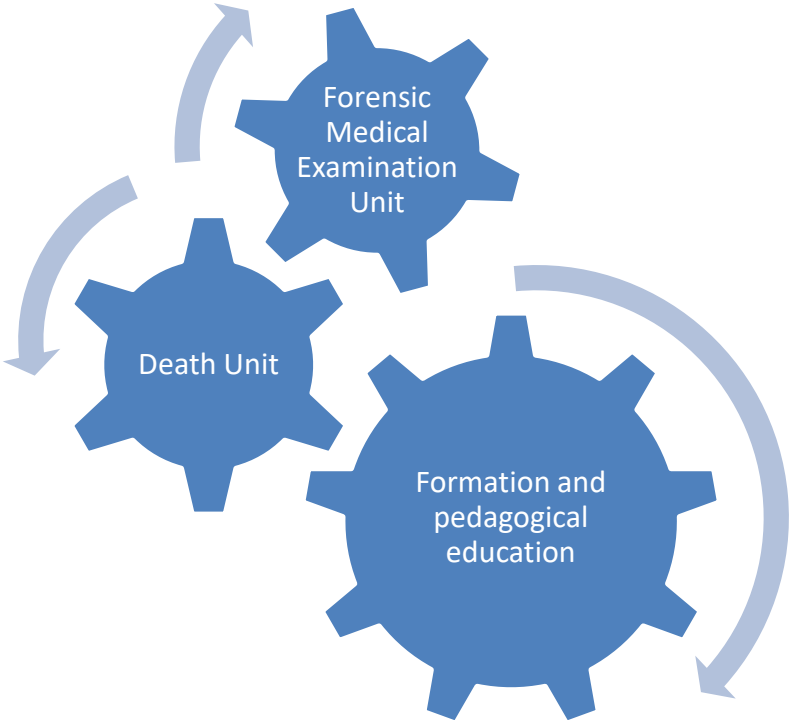


Fig.1. A representation of the main units of the Forensic Medicine Service and their medical and pedagogical work.

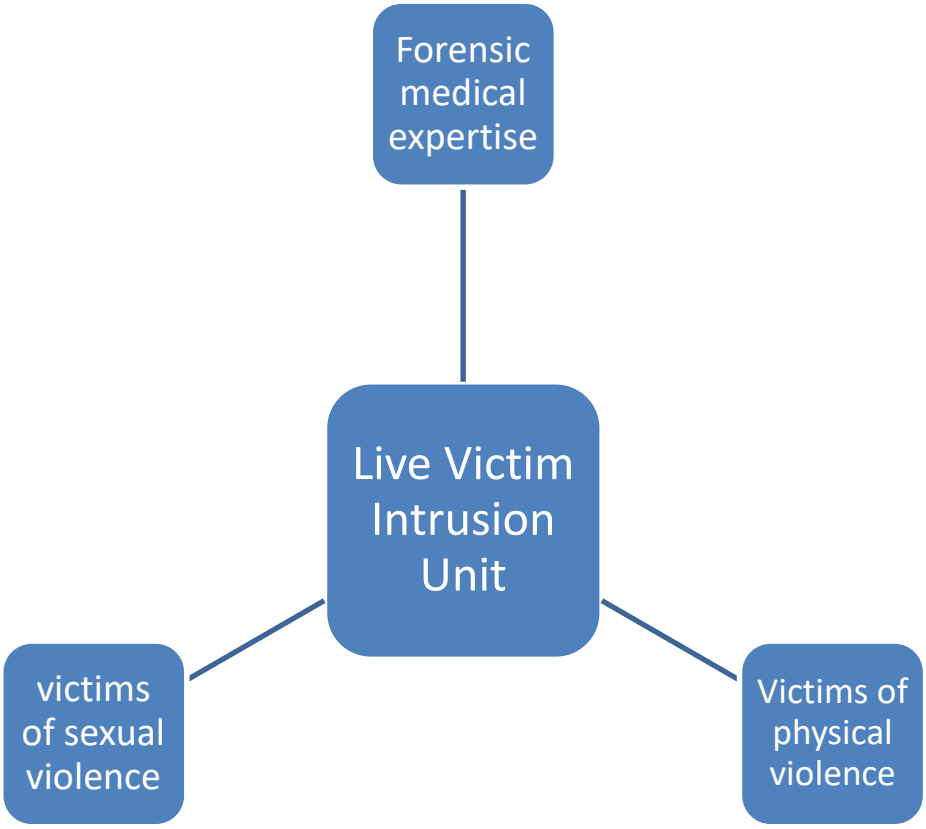


Fig.2. Illustrates the areas of care provided by the Biology Unit in the Forensic Medicine Authority.

3. THE BIOLOGY UNIT OF THE FORENSIC MEDICINE SERVICE IN BEJAIA OVER FOUR YEARS [1]

The Forensic Medicine Service of the Frantz Fanon Hospital, Bejaia University Hospital, opened its doors in 1999 by Dr. Gani Ismail. It has two medical units, one for the living and the other for the dead.
In 2015, the number of doctors working there reached four, three of whom were university hospital doctors, and this continued until late 2018. The service has a team consisting of nurses, assistants, and psychologists distributed across the two units.

3.1. Biology Unit Outcome

During the four years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, the unit conducted:

- More than 14,180 forensic medical examinations, including 13,263 for premeditated assault examinations.
- Approximately 174 forensic medical examinations following sexual assault.
- More than 780 psychological treatment packages were provided.

In addition, hundreds of judicial examinations, both civil and criminal.

3.2. Biology Unit Product

Examination:

This unit receives or visits victims and contributes to the immediate treatment of critical cases referred to it by the forensic doctor (medical and nursing). The examination consists of a careful examination of wounds and injuries, enabling the extraction of scientific evidence. The formation of the forensic medical file

complements and documents the doctor's findings. It includes the assignment document or mission order, photographs, submitted medical documents, and medical documents requested from the victim. The forensic doctor requests assistance from specialists if necessary and permitted by legal procedures. In addition to the systematic examination, ensuring psychological care for victims is a top priority in forensic medicine services, providing comprehensive care for victims of physical or sexual violence and the potentially devastating psychological impact they can have on the victim's psyche.

The forensic medical report

Consists of the preparation of the initial medical certificate examining the assault and battery, the gynecological forensic medical report, and the forensic medical expert reports (judicial services).

Before writing any report, the forensic doctor verifies the accuracy of information when medical reports from the same department and within the same specialty conflict, and when the victim's statements do not match the nature of the wounds, determining the stages of their development and comparing them with the statements of those involved in the forensic medical examination. In this context, for example, the color of a bruise (a first-degree contusion). Bruise is a mark on your skin caused by blood trapped under the surface. It happens when an injury crushes small blood vessels but does not break the skin. Those vessels break open and leak blood under the skin. [2] She varies according to its date of onset. It initially appears dark purple and then turns blue, then green, then yellow, until it disappears within a maximum of fifteen days (Figure 4). Through this feature, the forensic doctor can determine the time of injury. The forensic doctor detects cases of self-mutilation (Figure 3), which are a means and attempt to mislead the facts. These are referred to in the report to serve the purpose of justice. The forensic medical report is significant in its content, providing silent witness to a case of violence

and assault, and is a crucial document in the formation of a judicial file to document the scientific evidence that serves as a reference in the ruling.



Fig.3. Self-mutilation scratches, Forensic Medicine Service, Bejaia, 2015



Fig.4. Stages of bruise color change according to age
Taken from the Internet [2]

Difficulty Management

For vulnerable groups: such as children or minors, who are considered a special victim due to their age and physical makeup, their bodies are thoroughly examined in the presence and with their consent of their legal guardian. Psychological care is considered a duty and a necessity. When examining elderly individuals over 65 years of age, the forensic doctor takes into account their advanced age and facilitates the examination and screening process. Women victims of physical and sexual violence receive special treatment and continuous medical and psychological support.

For those with special needs, assistance is provided and they are given priority in the examination and screening process.

In cases where victims of sexual violence refuse to undergo an examination, they receive the necessary care. In the context of completing the task, the forensic doctor explains his or her mission in the presence of a psychiatrist, respects the refusal, and prepares a report.

In the event of difficulty examining wounds in intensive care units or after surgical procedures, the forensic doctor visits them within the first few hours and coordinates with doctors and surgeons to determine the nature and severity of the wounds before they are treated.

Professionalism

All the aforementioned reports are written clearly and in a simple, scientific style. They are placed in sealed envelopes addressed to the assigned or ordering authorities and then stored in paper and electronic archives. Intense cases are studied and presented for consultation with all forensic doctors.

Training

The university hospital team of the Forensic Medicine Service in Bejaia supervised the training of medical students in forensic medicine by providing lessons on identifying and understanding the nature of wounds, dealing with the effects of violence, and preparing medical reports, such as the medical description certificate, which is one of the pillars of the forensic medical file.

4. CONCLUSION

The work of the Forensic Medicine Authority's Biology Unit is manifested in two aspects: the first is examination and inspection, and the second is training and follow-up. All of these aspects serve to provide judicial authorities with scientific evidence that can be used to establish a case against the perpetrator, preserve the victim's rights, and, consequently, achieve justice.

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