

SECTION IV:

MEDICAL AND FORENSIC EVIDENCE PROCEDURES

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In cases of sexual assault frequently forensic evidence is critical in securing a conviction. Complainants of such assaults find the experience that they are forced to undergo in order to provide this essential evidence is sometimes as harrowing as the original assault.

A number of countries in the Commonwealth have attempted to ameliorate this problem, seeking to render the medical examination required for the gathering of the vital evidence as pleasant as practically possible. In the United Kingdom two models have emerged one hospital based. Both, however, seek to provide a more pleasant atmosphere in which to examine the woman and both seek to provide her with the most trained forensic expert so that her examination produces the best possible evidence. Further, both seek to put the complainant in touch with other services, such as services for sexually transmitted diseases and counsellors.

Guidelines:

- * Forensic evidence is often crucial in prosecutions for sexual offences.
- * Frequently the circumstances in which such evidence is gleaned predicts the integrity of such evidence.
- * Forensic and medical evidence may be easily lost. Police training must emphasise the importance of care in the collection of such evidence and the importance of continuity in the control of such evidence.
- * The training of police and of forensic scientists must be co-ordinated so that each profession is aware of the issues confronting the other.
- * Medical personnel should be trained in such a fashion that they can supply a support network for the police.