Human Trafficking and Exploitation: The Texas Requirement

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- Complete the questions at the end of the course.
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Faculty

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Previously acting as a faculty member at Capella University and Northcentral University, Dr. Yick Flanagan is currently a contributing faculty member at Walden University, School of Social Work, and a dissertation chair at Grand Canyon University, College of Doctoral Studies, working with Industrial Organizational Psychology doctoral students. She also serves as a consultant/subject matter expert for the New York City Board of Education and publishing companies for online curriculum development, developing practice MCAT questions in the area of psychology and sociology. Her research focus is on the area of culture and mental health in ethnic minority communities.

Faculty Disclosure

Contributing faculty, Alice Yick Flanagan, PhD, MSW, has disclosed no relevant financial relationship with any product manufacturer or service provider mentioned.

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The division planner and director have disclosed no relevant financial relationship with any product manufacturer or service provider mentioned.

Audience

This course is designed for Texas dental professionals who may intervene in suspected cases of human trafficking and/or exploitation.

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Course Objective

As human trafficking becomes an increasingly more common problem in the United States, healthcare and mental health professionals will require knowledge of human trafficking patterns, the health and mental health needs of human trafficking victims, and successful interventions for victims. The purpose of this course is to increase the level of awareness and knowledge about human trafficking and exploitation so dental professionals can identify and intervene in cases of exploitation.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Define human trafficking.
2. Identify the forms of human trafficking.
3. Identify individual, family/relationship, community/organizational, and societal/cultural factors that contribute to human trafficking.
4. Analyze the trafficking experience, including how traffickers recruit and the financial implications of trafficking.
5. Explain the psychological, health, and social consequences of human trafficking.
6. Utilize interviewing strategies to assess and identify victims and promote the ethical treatment of trafficking victims.
7. Outline the healthcare professional's responsibilities in identifying and assisting survivors of trafficking, including best practices for referral and collaboration.

Sections marked with this symbol include evidence-based practice recommendations. The level of evidence and/or strength of recommendation, as provided by the evidence-based source, are also included so you may determine the validity or relevance of the information. These sections may be used in conjunction with the course material for better application to your daily practice.

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is not a new social problem; it has always existed. Trafficking has recently received increased attention as a result of awareness and outreach efforts. It has garnered attention from feminists, religious conservatives, labor activists, immigration specialists, and the mental health professions [1]. This course will provide a basic overview of human trafficking (e.g., the scope, definitions and frameworks, contributing factors, different forms). The course will attempt to provide practitioners a glimpse of the lives of human trafficking victims, including the physical, psychological, social, and sexual abuse that human trafficking victims experience and the types of control tactics that perpetrators use. Specific interventions and responses will be covered, including mental health, social services, educational, prevention, and legal efforts. Finally, for practitioners who work with human trafficking victims, the emotional toil that it takes on practitioners as well as the importance of self-care will be discussed. Practitioners will be encouraged to view films and documentaries about human trafficking, as this is one way to "enter the lives" of human trafficking victims and better understand the dynamics of the complex world of human trafficking.

It is important to note that human trafficking can affect anyone—regardless of age, sex, race, socioeconomic status, or background. No single characteristic makes a person immune; traffickers exploit vulnerability in many forms, meaning that any individual can be at risk.

BACKGROUND

Because human trafficking is a complex issue, it is difficult to determine the scope of the problem. Many scholars and researchers believe that published estimates are just educated guesses. On a global level, the International Labour Organization has estimated that there were 49.6 million people living in modern slavery in 2021, 27.6 million in forced labor, and 22 million in forced marriage [2]. The estimates for the United States are not totally clear, but there were approximately 78,000 human trafficking victims reported to the U.S. State Department in 2016; only an estimated 0.2% are rescued [3]. According to Polaris, which founded and runs the National Human Trafficking Hotline, there have been a total of 40,200 cases of human trafficking reported since 2007 [3]. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice, the number of persons prosecuted for human trafficking increased from 729 in 2011 to 1,343 in 2020, an 84% increase [4].

A wide range of laws have been established to protect human trafficking victims and to prosecute perpetrators. A general knowledge of these laws is helpful when caring for victims and seeking appropriate social services. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was enacted in 2000 and reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2018, and 2022 by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Acts [5]. It emphasizes the three Ps: prevention, protection, and prosecution [5]. The prevention component consists of training and awareness; the protection dimension gives trafficked victims the ability to receive services using federal funds like other refugees; and the prosecution component focuses on laws and policies for the prosecution of traffickers.

Because victims of trafficking are often viewed as criminals, this law states that victims of severe trafficking should not be penalized for any illegal behaviors or acts they engaged in as a result of being trafficked, including entering the United States with false documents or no documentation or working without appropriate paperwork [6]. This law also allows T Nonimmigrant Status (T visas) to be granted to victims of trafficking so they may remain in the United States with the purpose of collaborating with the federal authorities to prosecute the perpetrators. During this time, victims are offered a range of benefits and services, including access to the Witness Protection Program [6]. After three years, victims can apply for permanent resident status [7].

One of the criticisms of the Act is that it places the burden of demonstrating innocence and coercion on the victim [8]. The Act also fails to recognize the complex dynamics of human trafficking. For example, it focuses more on sex trafficking versus other forms [9]. Many victims have been abused and terrorized by the perpetrators, who they must now provide information and evidence against to stay in the country. Victims are continually fearful that they will be deported [8].

Victims who are of minor age are eligible for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors programs, the Children's Health Insurance program, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [10]. Furthermore, victims between 16 and 24 years of age are eligible for work permits and can apply for the Job Corps program [10]. It is important to remember that the key to this law is that the victim must have experienced a "severe form" of trafficking and must be willing to assist in the apprehension and prosecution of the perpetrator to receive services [11].

DEFINITIONS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The United Nations defines human trafficking as [12]:

> The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

In essence, this definition involves three elements: force, coercion, and fraud [13]. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime divides the definition of human trafficking into three sections: the act, means, and purpose [14]. The act, or what is done, generally refers to activities such as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons. The means of trafficking consists of threats or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim. Finally, these acts are carried out for the purpose of exploitation, which includes prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or forced servitude, and the removal of organs [14].

The TVPA defines human trafficking to include both sex trafficking and labor trafficking [15]:

> Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age. Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. A victim need not be physically transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within this definition.

In many cases, women and children are considered the typical victims of human trafficking. Hart posits that women are more vulnerable to trafficking due to the lack of social safety nets in many developing countries [16]. Coupled with women's subordinate social status in many cultures, this leads to the "feminization of poverty." Although the social conditions may make women and children more vulnerable to human trafficking, the reality is that men are also victims of human trafficking.

Overall, the definition of human trafficking is ambiguous because of the many intersections with other issues (e.g., sexual abuse, domestic violence, forced marriage, forced labor) [17]. It occurs both domestically and internationally, but is primarily a hidden problem. This makes research efforts, the prosecution of perpetrators, and policy and community efforts to protect victims even more challenging [17]. It is vital to remember that trafficking, as defined by U.S. law, does not require crossing international or even state borders. The transport of victims from one locale to another is not a necessary component of determining whether human trafficking has occurred.

LIMITATIONS OF DATA ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Although the United Nations definitions are used in this course, scholars, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers have not come to a consensus definition of human trafficking. Consequently, terms such as sexual slavery, human smuggling, and modern-day slavery have all been used [18]. When the term human trafficking is utilized, it often has connotations of sexual exploitation affecting mainly women and girls, the most visible victims, but this is not accurate [18]. This perspective is partially attributable to the large number of religious and feminist organizations who have worked to eradicate non-consensual sex work [19]. This lack of consensus definition also raises questions about the study population in the research. The involved parties (i.e., the trafficker, those who are trafficked, and the networks) are continually changing in time and space [20].

Defining these terms is essential because it will ultimately influence responses to human trafficking. As stated, all social problems are competing for attention and resources, and the response is influenced by how the social problem is defined and portrayed [21]. Ultimately, the lack of a consensus definition is one of the reasons studying human trafficking has been a challenge and that research yields unreliable prevalence estimates.

Another reason human trafficking has been a difficult topic to research is the hidden and invisible nature of its victims and perpetrators. This makes it difficult for researchers to use traditional sampling methods. Even if trafficked victims are identified, perpetrators can move them to new locations [22]. If and when researchers access this hidden population, victims are often reluctant to talk due to fear, shame, and the stigma associated with their experiences. Consequently, much of what has been studied has relied on interviews with professionals (e.g., lawyers, advocates, police/law enforcement, and other service providers), which has led to recommendations that are not based on firsthand accounts [23].

A host of ethical issues also arise for those conducting research in this area. Protecting study participants' identities is paramount, and consequently, study participants signing informed consent forms, which are often required by institutional review boards, becomes complicated. Understandably, victims and perpetrators often will not want to sign forms using their real names for fear of deportation, arrest, and/or reprisals [22].

FORMS OF TRAFFICKING

The social realities of victims of human trafficking are difficult to comprehend, and some may wonder why victims remain silent and comply with their traffickers. The Silence Compliance Model was created to explore the factors that promote victims' seeming willingness to comply with their traffickers' demands [24]. This model has three categories: coercion, collusion, and contrition. Victims are coerced, brutalized, and threatened, and basic necessities of life are withheld from them. Methods of psychological coercion include isolation, induced exhaustion, threats, degradation, and monopolizing perception [25]. This serves to silence victims and create a sense of helplessness. By isolating and controlling victims' movements and limiting their exposure to the outside world, traffickers have complete monopoly of their attention and perception of reality [25]. Victims are then forced to collude with the traffickers as a result of their relative isolation, fear, false sense of belonging, and complete dependence on the trafficker. Finally, victims feel contrite, ashamed, stigmatized, and remorseful of the things they have been made to do [24].

Another model, the Action-Means-Purpose (AMP) Model, is a device used to illustrate and articulate the federal definition of a "victim of severe forms of trafficking in persons" [26]. The Action category consists of the actions a perpetrator takes to induce, recruit, harbor, transport, provide, or obtain a victim. The Means of force, fraud, or coercion are used for the ultimate Purpose of commercial sex or labor/services trafficking [26].

It is important to remember that human trafficking is not human smuggling. Human smuggling involves an individual being brought into a country through illegal means and is voluntary. The individual has provided some remuneration to another individual or party to accomplish this goal [7].

SEX TRAFFICKING

The TVPA of 2000 is a U.S. federal statute passed by Congress to address the issue of human trafficking and offers protection for human trafficking victims [15]. This statute defines sex trafficking as, "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act" [15]. A commercial sex act is, "any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person" [15]. In other words, it usually involves the illegal transport of humans into another country to be exploited in a sexual manner for financial gain [27]. However, it does not always involve the transport of victims from one region to another; such cases are referred to as "internal trafficking" [28]. Victims of sex trafficking could be forced into prostitution, stripping, pornography, escort services, and other sexual services [29]. Victims may be adult women or men or children, although there is a higher prevalence of women and girls. The term "domestic minor sex trafficking" has become a popular term used to connote the buying, selling, and/or trading of children younger than 18 years of age for sexual services within the country, not internationally [29; 30]. An element of force, fraud, or coercion is not necessary, as the victims are children and inherently vulnerable [30]. In the United States, the children most vulnerable to domestic minor sex trafficking are those who are homeless, abused, runaways, and/or in child protective services [29].

Although controversial, it is said that sex trafficking victims differ from consensual sex work in that sex trafficking victims are forced to involuntarily perform sexual services and are often not paid for their "work." Sex trafficking involves the use of force and coercion and can encompass other forms of criminal sexual activities, including forced erotic dancing, "mail-order brides," and pornography [28]. On the other hand, individuals involved in consensual sex work make a decision to provide sex services for a fee. The decision to enter sex work does not eliminate the possibility of being a victim of trafficking if one is held against his/her will through physical

and/or psychological abuse [4]. It is also important to remember that this does not necessarily mean sex work is a choice these individuals would have made if other options were available or that they have a choice in selecting their sexual partners and/or sexual activities [31].

BONDED LABOR/FORCED LABOR

The United Nations has defined debt bondage as [32]:

> The status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or of those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.

Essentially, because the individual does not have money as collateral for the debt owed, the individual pledges his/her labor or, in some cases, the labor of a child or another individual for an unspecified amount of time [33]. These individuals may be transported or trafficked into another country for the purpose of forced labor.

In many cases of bonded labor, the initial loan may be welcomed by the individual. However, the victims do not realize that with the low wages, unspoken high interest rates and other continually accruing fees, and the perpetrator's manipulation of the "accounts," laborers can never repay the loans. Some estimate that half of all persons in forced labor are bonded laborers. The majority of bonded labor cases occur in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan [34]. Some families find themselves in a cycle of poverty as the debt cannot be paid off and is passed down from generation to generation [33]. Bonded labor can involve laborers in brick kilns, mines, stone quarries, looming factories, agricultural farms, and other manufacturing factories [33]. In the United States, individuals may be trafficked to work long hours in garment factories, restaurants, and other manufacturing sectors. Frequently, the employer/captor will take away victims' identifications, monitor their movements, socially isolate them, and/or threaten deportation if they do not comply [35]. Migrant workers are at high risk of forced labor [4].

In the United States, forced labor is predominantly found in five sectors [35]:

- Prostitution and sex industry (46%)
- Domestic servitude (27%)
- Agriculture (10%)
- Sweatshops and factories (5%)
- Restaurant and hotel work (4%)

It is speculated that most of the forced labor occurs in California, Florida, New York, and Texas, all major routes for international travel [35].

Domestic servitude refers to a category of domestic workers (usually female) who work in forced labor as servants, housekeepers, maids, and/or caregivers, often in private homes. In some cases, young women are lured with the promise of a good education and work, and when they arrive in the United States, they are exploited economically, physically, and/or sexually. Their passports or identification papers are taken away, and they are told they have to pay off the debt incurred for their travel, processing fees, and any other bogus expenses. Because they do not speak English, they find they have no other recourse but to endure exploitative working conditions [36]. Unfortunately, as in many sectors of forced labor, there are no regulations to monitor the conditions under which domestic servants operate [35].

CHILD LABOR

Child labor can be viewed as a specific form of bonded labor or forced labor. However, not all child laborers have been trafficked. Child labor is defined by International Labour Organization (ILO) as economic labor performed by a child younger than 15 years of age or hazardous labor done by a child 18 years of age or younger. Child labor is deeply rooted in poverty and the infrastructure and political stability of the country as well as market forces [37]. The ILO estimates that there were 160 million

child laborers in the world in 2020 (63 million girls and 97 million boys) [38]. This accounts for nearly one in ten of all children worldwide [38]. Between 2000 and 2020 there was a nearly 35% decrease in the number of children in child labor. The reduction was greater for girls than for boys . The number of children in child labor has increased from 2008 to 2020 in sub-Saharan Africa (from 65.1 million to 86.6 million), while it has declined in other parts of the world (e.g., Asia/the Pacific, Latin America/the Caribbean) [38].

The definition of child labor is controversial because the definitions for "work" and "childhood" are ambiguous and often culturally defined [39]. On a conceptual level, work may be beneficial for the socialization and educational processes of children [39; 40]. So, it is important to differentiate between child work and child labor. Child work has been defined as activities that are supervised by an adult and that promote the development and growth of the child, while child labor does not benefit the child [37]. Many definitions of child labor create a dichotomy whereby child work is considered not harmful while child labor has negative emotional, intellectual, and social consequences [41]. Work that is exploitative for children has been defined as working long hours at a young age, work that is poorly compensated, and work that produces physical, social, and psychological stress that will hamper development, access to education, and self-esteem [42]. The ILO adds that child labor is work that "interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work" [40].

It is important to remember that child labor occurs in the United States. Runaway and homeless youths are at greatest risk, often lured by promises of work and housing [43]. The Polaris Project found that the top three forms of child labor trafficking in the United States were begging, peddling, and traveling sales crews [43].

CHILD CONSCRIPTION

In some cases of trafficking, children are kidnapped and trafficked to serve as soldiers. Other times, children are coerced by a narrative indicating they will be serving a higher purpose and avenge the deaths of family and friends; this is known as comradeship [44; 45]. Some children are actively recruited and may be promised a small salary to "voluntarily" join.

It is estimated that at any one time up to 300,000 children younger than 18 years of age are serving as child soldiers [46; 47]. Traffickers prefer to recruit children to serve as soldiers because they are inexpensive and more easily molded and shaped to comply and obey without question [48]. It can be difficult to comprehend the atrocities that these children witness and experience [49; 50].

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO VULNERABILITY TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

INDIVIDUAL

A variety of individual level factors may predispose an individual to human trafficking victimization. A history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and/or of witnessing violence in the home has been identified at increased rates among trafficking victims. Other possible risk factors include adherence to rigid sex roles, acceptance of norms supporting sexual exploitation of women and children, overestimation of problem behavior in peers/others, lack of trafficking awareness, and substance abuse [51].

Adverse Childhood Experiences

In more recent years, research has focused on the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in general. ACEs are defined as potentially traumatic experiences that affect an individual during childhood (before 18 years of age) and increase the risk for future health and mental health problems (including increased engagement in risky behaviors) as adults [52]. Abuse and neglect during childhood are clear

ACEs, but other examples include witnessing family or community violence; experiencing a family member attempting or completing suicide; parental divorce; parental or guardian substance abuse; and parental incarceration [52].

One study found that youths with human trafficking reports were significantly more likely to have experienced ACEs [53]. Specifically, sexual abuse was the strongest predictor of human trafficking. Girls with a history of sexual abuse were 2.52 times more likely to experience human trafficking, and boys who had been victims of sexual abuse were 8.21 times more likely to be trafficked.

Poverty and Economic Disenfranchisement

Poverty and incessant economic stressors caused by civil wars, natural disasters, and collapses of government systems all contribute to human trafficking [16; 30; 54]. In one study, the odds of being trafficked were nine times greater for those who felt extremely hopeless about upward mobility compared with those with lower levels of hopelessness [54].

RELATIONSHIP/FAMILY

Families marked by instability (e.g., domestic violence, child abuse, continual unemployment) are also at higher risk of having a member trafficked [30]. In addition, families entrenched in deep poverty may feel they have no other recourse but to sell a child or may be more easily lured with promises of money and a better future [54; 55; 56].

COMMUNITY/INSTITUTIONAL

Community factors (such as high social disorganization characterized by violence, unemployment, and high crime) contribute to higher risk of trafficking [30].

The rampant use of digital technology, such as the Internet, greatly facilitates sex trafficking. The relative anonymity of online contact can empower traffickers to recruit or sell victims. Graphic images of women and children engaged in sexual acts can be easily disseminated over the Internet [57]. Traffickers may employ the Internet for advertising, marketing to those interested in making pornography [57]. In addition, social media sites such as Facebook, Craigslist, and Instagram have been used as a means of facilitating trafficking (e.g., by connecting and grooming potential victims) [58; 59; 60]. Newsgroups offer opportunities for those interested in locating women and children for sexual exploitation.

In a 2013 qualitative study, smartphones were found to be integral in the business of trafficking [58]. Researchers indicated the phones were used "to maintain contact with each other, in order to facilitate the business 'transactions' and stay in touch with transnational 'partners' and other traffickers who remained in the country of origin" [58; 59].

SOCIETAL/CULTURAL

Globalization

Human trafficking has been called one of the "darkest sides of globalization" [61]. Globalization is the term used to describe the interconnectedness of countries and nations, which facilitates easy communication, exchange of ideas, and flow of goods, capital, and services [61]. Crimes such as human trafficking are affected by globalization just as legitimate businesses are [62]. Furthermore, the ideals of Western capitalism may reinforce human trafficking as a business or industry, with its emphasis on the free market and the flow of goods and services across international borders [62].

Globalization has also created the need for cheaper labor [34; 63]. A study involving 160 countries examined the effects of globalization and human trafficking trends [64]. Researchers found a positive relationship between globalization and trafficking for forced labor, sex work, and debt bondage.

Corruption

Human trafficking cannot occur without the existence of corruption within existing infrastructures. Public officials, police officers, and local leaders in many developing countries have been known to take bribes to provide protection to parties involved in various aspects of human trafficking [61; 64; 65].

Racialized Sexual Stereotypes

Race and ethnicity have been inextricably linked to sexual violence and victimization. Myths regarding sexuality in certain cultures or racial fetishization may affect trafficking patterns. For example, there is an over-representation of Asian women on American Internet pornography sites in part due to popular myths sexualizing, eroticizing, and exoticizing Asian women. This has translated into trafficking, as traffickers respond to the demand for young Asian women and girls in part fueled by these stereotypes of exotic, docile, submissive, and eager-to-please Asian women [36]. These stereotypes devalue and dehumanize people, which is the underlying core of human trafficking. This contributes to the acceptability of the exploitation of individuals, particularly members of marginalized groups [66].

These racial stereotypes go beyond simply framing the victims in a particular manner [67]. They raise implicit questions regarding how the powers of state are depicted. In other words, the patriarchal attitudes of certain countries lead to "bad" or "backward" cultural practices or ways of being that then cause trafficking—setting up a dichotomy of the "West" and "others" [67].

Culture

Although many are careful in linking cultural factors to the etiology of human trafficking for fear of imposing judgment on a particular culture, many maintain that cultural ideologies that tolerate sexual trafficking, bonded labor, and child labor may be a stronger factor than poverty in predicting trafficking rates [36; 42]. For example, some cultures emphasize collectivism and prioritizing the needs of the family and group first before the needs of the individual. Some children may feel they have to sacrifice themselves for their family when traffickers promise money [36]. Traffickers also know that they can threaten to hurt victims' families to keep them from escaping [36].

Furthermore, in many cultures, boys are more highly valued than girls, and as a result, girls are considered more dispensable [36]. Sons are considered the family's social security, staying with the family while daughters marry into other families. Therefore, girls may be more likely to be sold into slavery than boys.

Child labor is also inextricably tied to cultural factors. In India, for example, child labor is common because it is believed that children in the lower levels of the caste system (i.e., the "untouchables") should be socialized early to understand their position in society [42]. It has been observed that when traditional cultural and societal norms about women's roles were relaxed in some European countries and more women entered the labor force, child labor decreased [42]. Ultimately, it is difficult to unravel the effects of poverty and culture because the pressures of poverty can lead families to use tradition as a justification to sacrifice young men, women, and children [42].

Ultimately, the conversation about human trafficking is complex, and to attempt to isolate the causes is beyond challenging. Multiple factors have been suggested as possibly predicting human trafficking, including macroeconomic factors (e.g., gross domestic product per capita), unemployment rates, female inequality, cultural oppression, and lack of protection of women's rights [68; 69]. In one study, ease of land access to the destination country appeared to be a powerful predictor in terms of the number of individuals trafficked [68].

TRAFFICKERS: AN OVERVIEW

Much attention has been focused on the victims of trafficking; however, it is important to also understand the perpetrators.

It has been suggested human traffickers employ five general strategies to recruit and traffic victims [6; 70; 71; 72]:

- Kidnapping: Traffickers may kidnap their victims. They may lure them with food or treats or take them by force. Victims with few if any social ties are highly vulnerable, as no one will miss them or report their disappearance.
- Targeting poor families: Traffickers may convince families to sell their children (often daughters). Because many families in developing countries live in abject poverty, traffickers will stress to victims' families how the money will help them to survive. Other traffickers may tell families that selling their daughter will provide her with more promising opportunities.
- Developing a false romantic relationship with victim: A tactic often used with young girls, perpetrators pose as boyfriends by romancing victims, buying gifts, and proclaiming their love. Victims have a difficult time believing that their boyfriends would hurt or deceive them, making them easy targets for trafficking.
- Fake storefronts: Some employment, modeling, or marriage agencies are fronts for illegal trafficking operations. A potential victim might be lured with the promise of employment, a lucrative modeling contract, or an arranged marriage in the United States. After victims have been lured in, traffickers come to assess their "product." Perpetrators may be family members or friends.
- Legal storefronts: Some legal businesses in the tourism, entertainment, and leisure industries integrate trafficking activities into their business structure.
- Recruiting local sex workers: Traffickers might purchase sex workers working in local night clubs from brothel owners or simply lure sex workers by promising them a more affluent future. These trafficked sex workers may later recruit younger victims.

IMPACT ON VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

In studies of trafficked women, headaches, fatigue, dizziness, back pain, pelvic pain, stomach pain, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and gynecologic infections were common, generally the result of continual physical, psychological, and sexual abuse [30; 73]. Victims of labor trafficking also experience health issues related to the type of work, workplace conditions, malnutrition, and violence [74]. It is important to remember that some of these somatic complaints, such as headaches, fatigue, and gastrointestinal problems, may be underlying symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress [73]. Some cultural groups might not use the terms "depression," "sad," or "anxious," but may use metaphors and somatic symptoms to describe their pain, all of which are embedded within cultural ideologies. The most common culture-based idioms of distress are somatic symptoms. Some groups tend not to psychologize emotional problems; instead, they experience psychological conflicts as bodily sensations (e.g., headaches, bodily aches, gastrointestinal problems, and dizziness).

Using an in-depth, direct interview survey designed to explore each stage of the trafficking experience, a multi-country European study identified a range of aversive health, sexual, and reproductive consequences common among women and adolescent victims of human trafficking [75]:

- Pre-departure stage: All victims reported having had limited knowledge of the health implications of having sex with strangers, and only 1 in 25 felt well-informed regarding the risks of acquiring HIV or other STIs.
- Travel and transit stage: Half of those interviewed reported having been confined, beaten, and/or raped during the journey.

- Destination stage: A large majority reported having been "intentionally hurt" (as evidenced by contusions, lacerations, loss of consciousness, and signs of head trauma); subjected to solitary confinement and deprived of human contact and adequate food and nutrition; subject to a variety of physical ailments, including headache, fever, undiagnosed pelvic pain, urinary tract infection, STIs, rash/scabies, and oral/dental health issues. All had experienced repeated sexual abuse or coercion, and 1 in 4 reported at least one unintended pregnancy (often involving negative outcomes of abortions performed in unsafe and unhealthy conditions).

Child and Adolescent Victims

Among child victims of human trafficking, healthy growth and development are especially problematic. Malnourishment and poor hygiene often lead to delayed bone growth, poorly formed teeth, and early dental caries [76]. The intense nature of child labor also has severe negative physical and health consequences.

Under normal circumstances, young children are still developing physically; however, such adverse conditions can halt their development. The lungs of adolescent boys typically experience the most rapid growth around 13 to 17 years of age; working in conditions characterized by excessive toxic dust or unclean air makes them more vulnerable to developing silicosis and fibrosis [77]. In the United States, young children participating in agricultural work are at risk of the major traumas associated with farm work, such as injuries caused by tractors or falling from heights, in addition to those injuries associated with repetitive stress and exposure to toxins. Children have thinner layers of epidermis, which make them more vulnerable to the toxicity of pesticides, and this can ultimately increase their risks for certain cancers [77]. Children working in gold mines do intensive digging, lifting, and transporting and mix mercury with the crushed ore, often with their bare hands. Mercury toxicity can lead to neurologic symptoms such as loss of vision, tremors, and memory loss [78].

DENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Victims may present with dental trauma and loss of teeth from violent acts. Injuries to the face and mouth area are common in abuse cases, and the potential for tooth involvement is high. Other dental problems arise as well, including infectious complications due to HIV, and even oral cancers or gingival disease due to substance use or poor access to dental care [79].

SEXUAL/REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

In the context of forced sex work among trafficked victims, safeguards against infection (e.g., regular condom use), early diagnosis, and adequate antimicrobial treatment are inconsistently employed or absent entirely [75]. Consequently, in addition to unwanted pregnancy, the risk for pelvic inflammatory disease and subsequent infertility is relatively high. Moreover, the relationship between forced sex work and HIV infection is stronger when sexual violence is involved. Women who are forced into sex work are 11 times more likely to become HIV-infected than women who engage in consensual sex work [80]. Sexual violence may increase the transmission risk as a result of open abrasions and injuries to the vagina. Furthermore, sexual violence can negatively impact self-esteem, which could then deter victims from advocating more strongly for condom use [80].

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV has identified trafficked women/commercial sex workers as a group vulnerable to sexual violence. Inquiries about such vulnerabilities will help to identify those in need of additional support and help to facilitate appropriate referrals to mental health services, general practitioners, and support agencies. Access to interpreter and advocacy services may be helpful.

(https://www.bashhguidelines.org/media/1079/4450.pdf. Last accessed January 25, 2024.)

Level of Evidence: Expert Opinion/Consensus Statement

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Victims of trafficking experience a host of psychological, mental health, and emotional distress. Depression, suicidal ideation, substance use, and anxiety are typically cited mental health problems [30]. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is also common given the trauma many victims experience, including physical and/or sexual violence and abuse; victims forced into sex work experience continual, daily sexual assault [81]. In a study of 192 European women who were trafficked but who managed to escape, the overwhelming majority (95%) disclosed that they experienced physical and sexual violence during the time of their trafficked experience [73]. More than 90% reported sexual abuse, and 76% reported physical abuse.

Trafficked victims experience fear from the start of their capture through the transit phase and after they arrive at their destination. During the transit stage, many victims experience dangerous border crossings, risky types of transports, injury, beatings, and sexual assault [75]. Upon arrival to their destination, many trafficking victims have been socially isolated, held in confinement, and deprived of food [82]. All sense of security is stripped from them—their personal possessions, identity papers, passports, visas, and other documents are taken [75; 82]. The continual fear for their personal safety and their families' safety and the perpetual threats of deportation ultimately breed a sense of loss of control and learned helplessness. It is not surprising that depression, anxiety, and PTSD are common symptoms experienced by trafficked victims.

In a study of 164 survivors of human trafficking who returned to Nepal, the authors examined the extent to which they experienced PTSD, depression, and anxiety [83]. All of the survivors experienced some level of these disorders, but the survivors who were trafficked for sex experienced higher levels of depression and PTSD compared to those who were not trafficked for sex. In a study with Moldovan survivors of human trafficking, researchers found that six months after their return, 54% had a diagnosable mental health issue. Specifically, 35.8% met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, 12.5% met the criteria for major depression, and 5.8% were diagnosed with an anxiety disorder [84].

There is also some evidence that trafficked victims may experience complex PTSD, a type of PTSD that involves an acute change of the victims' sense of self, their relationship with others, and their relationship with God or a higher being [85]. These persons direct anger inwardly (toward themselves) as well as toward their perpetrators, which results in a loss of faith in themselves and the world [82; 85; 86]. Perhaps due to self-directed anger and shame, some will engage in risky sexual behaviors, self-harm, and substance abuse. Some victims also have difficulty managing and expressing how they are feeling, while others experience dissociation [82].

Substance abuse is also common among victims. In interviews, trafficked women discussed how traffickers forced them to use substances like drugs and/or alcohol so they could work longer hours, take on more clients, and/or perform sexual acts that they could not normally perform [75]. Other victims used substances as a means to cope with their situations. Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender report additional shame and confusion when forced to engage in heterosexual relationships [86].

Children forced into labor experience grueling hours and are frequently beaten by their captors. Underage victims of domestic sex trafficking fluctuate through a range of emotions, including despair, shame, guilt, hopelessness, anxiety, and fear [87]. Depending upon the level of trauma, some engage in self-destructive behaviors like self-mutilation or suicide attempts. For some, their ambivalence toward the perpetrators may be confusing. On the one hand, they want to escape the abuse, yet simultaneously, they may have a sort of traumatic bond with the perpetrators [87].

Children forced into conscription will also experience a host of psychological symptoms. In a study comparing former Nepalese child soldiers and children who were never conscripted, former child soldiers experienced higher levels of depression, anxiety, PTSD, psychological difficulties, and functional impairments [88]. In another study of former child soldiers from the Congo and Uganda, one-third met the criteria for PTSD [49]. The researchers found there was a relationship between greater levels of PTSD symptoms and higher levels of feelings of revenge and lower levels of openness to reconciliation [49]. In-depth narrative interviews of former child soldiers from northern Uganda found that the children spoke of the violence and atrocities they witnessed without any emotion, as if they had removed themselves from their experiences [89]. This speaks to how the victims have to numb themselves psychologically in order to cope. The researchers also found that the children who lost their mothers were more traumatized by this experience than by the violence they witnessed as soldiers.

Some have argued that the diagnostic criteria of PTSD may not be easily applied to those from different cultures. As a result, it is important to assess for other psychiatric disorders, such as depression. Japan, for example, never used the PTSD diagnosis prior to 1995, despite the fact that they have a large and intricate mental health system [90]. Ultimately, PTSD cannot be universally applied to every culture and for every humanitarian crisis; therefore, if a human trafficking victim does not necessarily fall within the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* criteria for PTSD, one cannot necessarily conclude that they have not experienced trauma or are not traumatized [90].

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES AND QUALITY OF LIFE

When rescued and attempting to reintegrate into their communities, victims of human trafficking often experience stigma, ostracism, and marginalization [88; 91]. For example, in Nepal, community members perceived returning child soldiers who had performed acts such as carrying dead bodies or coed sleeping as in violation of Hindu cultural norms [88]. One documentary following former child soldiers living in a refugee camp in northern Uganda found that preconceived notions and myths about children soldiers often led to ridicule and ostracism after they were liberated from the army and returned home.

However, girls who were recruited as soldiers, who were forced to have sex, or who return with children appear to be the most marginalized group [92]. In a qualitative study of former girl soldiers in Sierra Leone, researchers found that, compared to returning boy soldiers, girls were perceived to have violated norms related to sex roles and values about sexuality. Although psychologically and developmentally they were still children, the community perceived and treated them as "damaged" or "unclean" women. Their communities were not able to re-integrate them, despite the victimization they experienced. These girls lacked voice and experienced shame, marginalization, poverty, and powerlessness upon their return [92]. In a study of former child soldiers in Uganda, the children reported having difficulty finding jobs or getting married when they returned home. Girls who had been raped were stigmatized and made to feel unwelcome in their communities. Others stated that their community perceived them as murderers [50].

IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

INTERACTION WITH VICTIMS

Healthcare providers are often the most likely to encounter a victim of human trafficking under circumstances that provide an opportunity to intervene, and victims may be encountered in most mental health and healthcare venues. One study estimated that 30% to 87.8% of victims accessed medical services at some point during their trafficking [93]. Survivors may seek care in hospital emergency rooms, at local mental health authorities, urgent care facilities, family planning clinics, or outpatient medical settings for a variety of issues, including

sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, depression (including suicidality), injuries resulting from assault, substance abuse-related issues, and PTSD [94]. Because medical and dental appointments may allow for more privacy than a victim's other encounters, they may represent a unique opportunity for healthcare providers to intervene.

Yet, many providers lack the training and confidence to identify and assist victims. In a survey of 110 emergency department physicians, nurses, and physician assistants, the majority (76%) reported having a knowledge of human trafficking, but only 13% felt equipped to identify a trafficking victim and only 22% were confident in their ability to provide satisfactory care for such patients [95]. Less than 3% had ever received any training on this topic. In a separate survey of healthcare and social service providers, only 37% had ever received training on identification of trafficking victims [96]. This lack of healthcare provider knowledge is the root of some victim's reluctance to disclose.

Because human trafficking and exploitation are, by nature, covert processes, the identification and rescue of the victim can be difficult. As stated, traffickers often move victims from one area to another to reduce the risk of identification, and one of the main problems with the assessment of such individuals is that practitioners may only have a one-time encounter with the victim [97]. Other provider challenges include language barriers, the hidden nature of the crime, lack of self-identification as a victim, confusing or contradictory laws/regulations, lack of organizational protocols, and stereotypes/misconceptions [98].

Several barriers exist that prevent survivors from self-disclosing their experiences, including [98]:

- Unable to self-identify
- Lack of knowledge of services
- Fear of retaliation
- Fear of law enforcement/arrest/deportation
- Lack of trust
- Shame/stigma
- Learned helplessness/PTSD
- Cultural/language barriers
- Lack of transportation

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

All interactions with patients, regardless of whether or not they are potential victims of trafficking, should be centered on the patient's experiences, needs, and preferences. Providing patient-centered care means that care will be respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values and will reflect the patient's values. This should be considered at all stages of assessment, intervention, and continued care/follow-up.

It is important to use a trauma-informed approach when assessing and caring for potential victims, which requires that practitioners understand the impact of trauma on all areas of an individual's life [99]. Physical, emotional, and psychological safety is at the heart of trauma-informed care. This approach allows for trust-building and continued communication, two factors that are vital to ensuring that patients receive the care and support they require.

Being trauma-informed is a strengths-based approach that is responsive to the impact of trauma on a person's life. It requires recognizing symptoms of trauma and designing all interactions with victims of human trafficking in such a way that minimizes the potential for re-traumatization. This involves creating a safe physical space in which to interact with survivors as well as assessing all levels of service and policy to create as many opportunities as possible for survivors to rebuild a sense of control. Most importantly, it promotes survivor empowerment and self-sufficiency. Survivors should also have access to services that promote autonomy and are comprehensive, victim-centered, and culturally appropriate. Additionally, trafficking survivors share that one of the most important steps to being trauma-informed is to be survivor-informed [100].

POTENTIAL RED FLAGS

Bruises, scars, and other signs of physical abuse may be missed on examination, as victims are often beaten in areas hidden by clothing (e.g., the lower back) so as not to affect the victim's outer appearance. Physical trauma symptoms may be present, commonly on the torso, breast, and/or genital areas [101]. Burns, broken bones, pelvic pain, and/or STIs (particularly in children) may also be red flags [102]. However, more common physical injuries are also typical with other circumstances, making physical exam of limited value. The entire clinical picture should be considered.

It may also be helpful to assess for tattoos and/or other modifications (e.g., branding, piercings). Some perpetrators use tattoos to identify victims or to signify "ownership" [60].

With regard to episodic clinical encounters, recommendations for providing safe assessments in a culturally sensitive manner are lacking. The Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families maintains a useful website that addresses practical issues of human trafficking for allied professional groups, known as the Look Beneath the Surface Campaign [76]. Included are diagnostic and interviewing tips to help healthcare providers recognize and refer trafficking victims to appropriate services [76]. Emergency and primary care providers should be cognizant of clues that a patient may be the victim of trafficking and prepared to engage in a greater depth of inquiry with special attention to the following indicators [76; 102; 103; 104]:

- Does someone, other than family, who behaves in a controlling manner, accompany the patient? Traffickers attempt to guard and control most every aspect of the victim's life, while maintaining isolation from family, friends, and other common forms of human interaction.
- Are there inconsistencies in answers to basic questions (e.g., name, age, address)?
- Does the patient speak English? If not, has he or she recently been brought to this country, and from where? Many victims of human trafficking have recently been trafficked from other countries. As discussed, common sending countries/regions include Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, India, and Russia.
- If the patient is accompanied by someone other than a family member, who does the talking, and why? Attempt to interview and examine the patient separately and alone, using an interpreter if necessary. Probe in a sensitive manner for detailed information on the situation and relationship.
- Does the patient show signs of psychosocial stress (e.g., appears withdrawn, submissive, fearful, anxious, depressed)? Can the individual account for this?
- Are there visible signs of physical abuse (e.g., bruises, lacerations, scars)? How does the individual explain these?
- Does the patient lack a passport or other immigration and identification documentation (e.g., driver's license, social security number, visa)? If so, what explanation is given? To control victims' movements, traffickers often take away passports and any legal identification documents.
- What is the patient's home and work situation? Basic questions about what they eat, where they live and sleep, who else lives with them, and what work they do can be revealing. For example, "Can you leave your work or job situation if you wish?" or "When you are not working, can you come and go as you please?"
- Is the explanation given for the clinical visit consistent with the patient's presentation and clinical findings?

- Does the victim appear fearful when asked questions about citizenship, country of origin, immigration status, or residence? This may indicate a fear of deportation.
- If the victim is a minor, is s/he in school? Living with parents or relatives? If not, what reasons are given for these circumstances?

If answers to these questions indicate that an individual may be a victim of human trafficking, one should contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Under the child abuse laws, practitioners who are mandated reporters and who are suspicious that a minor is being abused should immediately report the abuse to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). For more information regarding specific states' reporting requirements, please visit https://www.littleleague.org/player-safety/child-protection-program/state-specific-information-child-abuse.

In addition, older and dependent adults may be victims of abuse, exploitation, or trafficking. Because these individuals may be especially vulnerable due to reliance on others for care and support, state law requires that any person who suspects such mistreatment must report it immediately to the DFPS. Recognizing and reporting suspected abuse is essential to protecting the safety and dignity of older and dependent adults.

SCREENING QUESTIONS

Examples of questions to screen for human trafficking include [105; 106; 107]:

- Can you tell me about your living situation?
- Has anyone ever threatened you with violence if you attempted to leave?
- Does anyone force/require you to have sexual intercourse for your work?
- Has anyone ever threatened your family if you attempted to leave?
- Does anyone make you feel scared at work?
- Are you free to come and go as you wish?
- Does your home have bars on windows, blocked windows/doors, or security cameras?
- How many hours do you work?
- Have you ever worked without receiving payment you thought you would get?
- Do you owe your employer money?
- Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep, use the bathroom, or go to the doctor?

The Polaris Project has developed a flow chart for the assessment of potential trafficking victims, available at https://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/Assessment%20Tool%20-%20Medical%20Professionals.pdf. Again, if a person is thought to be a victim, healthcare providers should follow workplace protocols and/or contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 for next steps.

INTERVIEWING TRAFFICKED VICTIMS: BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Service providers should repeatedly weigh the risks and benefits of various actions when interviewing human trafficking victims [70; 108; 109]. Survivor safety is of utmost importance, and a private conversation should be sought, if at all possible. It may be necessary to be discrete or nonchalant when requesting to speak with the victim alone, as angering the trafficker may result in negative consequences for the victim. If the agency has a policy to always speak to patients alone, this may be easier to explain. Other strategies to separate a possible victim from a companion include stating the need for a private exam or testing (e.g., radiology, urine test). A companion's assistance with paperwork may also be requested in an outside office or lobby. If the potential victim does not want to be alone or is reluctant to go to a private location, it is vital to respect her/his wishes.

In addition, the following interviewing recommendations were published by the World Health Organization to encourage service providers to continually and ethically promote human trafficking victims' safety during every phase of the interviewing process [102; 110]:

- Each victim and trafficking situation should be treated as unique; there are no standard templates of experiences. Listen carefully to the victim's story. Each story told is unique, and each patient will voice distinctive concerns. Believe each story, no matter how incredible it may seem. As rapport and trust build (perhaps very slowly), accounts may become more extensive.
- Always be safe and assume the victim is at risk of physical, psychological, social, and legal harm.
- Evaluate the risks and benefits of interviewing before starting the interviewing process. The interviewing process should not invoke more distress. In other words, the interviewing process should not end up re-traumatizing the victim.
- Provide referrals for services where necessary; however, it is necessary to be realistic and not make promises that cannot be kept. Trust is vital because it has been severed on so many levels for trafficking victims.
- Victims' readiness to change will not be based on what society defines as "ready" or on social expectations. Some victims will eagerly grasp new opportunities, while others may be fearful of potential traffickers' threats and be less receptive to help.
- Determine the need for interpreters and if other service providers should be present during the interviewing phase. Ensure that everyone involved is adequately prepared in their knowledge about human trafficking, how perpetrators control their victims, and how to ask questions in a culturally sensitive manner. Keep in mind that often times, traffickers will offer to help with the interpreting. Using interpreters from the same community of the victim should be avoided to prevent breaches in confidentiality.
- All involved should be prepared with an emergency plan. For example, is there a set plan for a victim who indicates he/she is suicidal or in danger of being hurt?
- Always be sure to obtain informed consent. Remember that the informed consent process is going to be unfamiliar to many victims. In addition, self-determination and autonomy have been compromised by continual threats and being forced to commit dehumanizing acts. Avoid using legal and technical jargon.

Providers should assume that human trafficking victims are describing their reality to the best of their ability, given the trauma they have experienced. Responses and behaviors (e.g., being guarded, defensive, belligerent) may be coping mechanisms [99].

SAFETY MEASURES

While it may be necessary to modify the approach depending on the situation, the Advocates for Human Rights recommends that safety plans for trafficking survivors [111]:

- Are personalized, realistic, involve friends and family that the victim trusts, and cover every aspect of the victim's life
- Focus on improving safety in the victims' environment
- Assess the current risk and identify current and potential safety concerns
- Create strategies for avoiding or reducing the threat of harm
- Outline concrete options for responding when safety is threatened or compromised, including:
  - Determining who victims will call in an emergency and memorizing those phone numbers or preparing a small card listing the numbers
  - Identifying where victims will go if there is an emergency

  - Identifying what victims will do if the trafficker contacts them after they leave the trafficking situation (e.g., retain messages, contact the police or a victim advocate)
  - Assessing how to handle safety issues when victims have family or friends, including those in another country, who are at risk of harm from the trafficker
- Are re-evaluated at various stages of the trafficking situation
- Reflect changing circumstances in the victim's life and changes in support or services (e.g., victims may have felt safe with a particular situation at the time of preparing the safety plan, but they may not feel safe in that same situation in the future)
- Address what victims will do in response to flashbacks or triggers, including those in any new workplace
- Strategize how to address and replace technology, such as cell phones, that the trafficker provided or had access to (e.g., leaving phones in places victims are allowed to be or providing phones just for calling 911)

In addition, non-U.S. citizens should have access to an emergency contact in the United States (potentially a legal services provider) and plans for young children (i.e., a decision-making proxy). Youth victims may require housing assistance [111].

DOCUMENTATION

Ideally, the victim of human trafficking should be offered a formal forensic evaluation; this requires written documentation of informed consent. Injuries should be documented in photographs, diagrams, or sketches. A growing number of hospitals now employ dedicated forensic nurses as part of a multispecialty sexual assault team [112]. Often, however, these trained specialists are not the first professionals to interact with the patient. Consequently, all healthcare professionals, particularly those in an emergency care setting, should have an understanding of the principles that govern proper collection and preservation of evidence during the examination of an assault victim.

The initial clinical assessment includes a careful history and physical examination, followed by selected laboratory testing and radiographic studies as indicated by clinical findings. Examination of the forensic patient is conducted in a thorough head-to-toe or toe-to-head manner, with the intent of documenting every indication of injury related to the incident (no matter how insignificant and involving every part of the body) using a body-map or wound chart. The entire body surface should be palpated to identify areas of bruising that may not yet be visible. Documentation and collection of evidence typically occurs at the same time as the physical exam—as evidence is detected it should be collected.

Forensic documentation includes a written component, a diagrammatic component, and a photographic component. Each should accurately inform the other. The written component must be detailed, accurate, and objective; the diagrammatic component must be thorough and legible; and the photographic component must include a measurement scale, be representative of the evidence, and remain objective.

RESPONSE AND FOLLOW-UP

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS' ROLE

Care and services provided to victims can be organized into three distinct categories: immediate and concrete services at the time of rescue; services related to recovery; and long-term services pertaining to reintegration [113]. When trafficking victims are rescued, a great deal of counseling services and practical, day-to-day assistance will be required. Housing, transportation, food, clothing, medical care, dental care, financial assistance, educational training, reunification (for those who wish to return to their homeland), and legal aid are some of the concrete services needed [24]. Practitioners should connect, coordinate, and case manage these services as much as possible. During this stage, it is also important to understand victims' needs, their strengths, and their risks and vulnerabilities [82].

Safety planning is also crucial in the immediate rescue stage. Traffickers may be continuing to try to locate some victims; placing victims in safe houses may be necessary [86]. The National Human Trafficking Hotline encourages that safety planning be based on the unique needs and circumstances of the individual. One should also take steps to ensure that one's own safety is also protected.

During the recovery and reintegration stages, as discussed, human trafficking victims experience an array of mental health and psychological issues. Mental health counseling is vital, but it is important to remember that the concept of counseling or talk therapy may be foreign to victims from non-Western cultures [70]. The expression of emotions may be in opposition to cultural values of emotional restraint, which can be intensified by feelings of shame and guilt resulting from experiences with sexual and physical assault. Beyond the paramount importance of the practitioner gaining the patient's trust, practitioners may educate patients about the counseling process and explore their patients' expectations about counseling, healing, and recovery [114]. As noted, victims' symptoms may not only be a manifestation of the trauma but also coping mechanisms to cope with self-blame, shame, and trauma [60].

Given differing cultural beliefs about healing, it is crucial that practitioners be open to alternative treatment and explore with patients the use of traditional healing methods [70]. There are many indigenous healing interventions victims may be using, including cultural rituals, faith healing, therapeutic touch, herbal remedies, and spiritual practices [115]. These interventions are multi-layered, taking into account the physical, psychological, communal, and spiritual [115]. These healing methods are historically rooted in specific cultures, and therefore, practitioners should become familiar with traditional healing methods and how they can be integrated with Western counseling techniques [114]. For example, given many cultural groups' beliefs that unmarried girls are defiled if raped, a cultural cleansing ritual may be needed as a first step to help a community accept a returning victim who was sexually assaulted during her trafficking experience [36]. After this ritual is performed, it is possible that both the patient and her family may be more open to counseling and other services.

Other trauma interventions that might be beneficial include cognitive-behavioral therapies, eye movement and desensitization reprocessing therapies, mindfulness techniques, and expressive therapies [60; 86].

Physicians, social workers, nurses, therapists, and counselors must be familiar with legal, case management, educational, job and life skills training, and housing services in the community. Human trafficking victims are not only unfamiliar with navigating the social service system, but many are also not proficient in English. Therefore, practitioners will serve as coordinators and advocates, linking necessary services. In one study, the majority of agencies had to rely on collaboration in order to refer clients [116]. Social workers and practitioners relied on word-of-mouth and community meetings to learn about services in order to better meet the needs of human trafficking victims. Furthermore, because many community organizations and agencies are not familiar with human trafficking, practitioners must take a primary role in educating colleagues about the complex dynamics of human trafficking.

It is important to remember that the evidence supporting interventions and therapies for victims of human trafficking is in its infancy [113]. Most efficacy studies of therapies and interventions do not involve experimental designs, which makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions regarding efficacy. Future work is needed to develop and evaluate interventions that address the multilayered and complex needs of human trafficking survivors.

REFERRAL

The needs of human trafficking survivors are diverse, and healthcare professionals should be prepared to refer these individuals to a wide variety of services. In the initial period, acute injuries, mental health crises, and stabilization (e.g., housing, safety) are the greatest concerns. However, many victims experience chronic health and mental health issues related to their traumatization and will also require referral to services that will allow healing throughout their lifetimes.

As such, organizations and healthcare providers should work to build a trusted local network of resources, including substance abuse treatment centers, educational and career advancement services, financial support, PTSD/complex trauma assessment and treatment, and potentially law enforcement representatives with experience providing services to victims of human trafficking. In the state of Texas, statewide and local organizations and government offices are available to assist in building this network. A listing of these resources is available at the end of this course.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (administered by Polaris) also maintains a National Referral Directory that is searchable by sex, nationality, age, type of trafficking, type of service(s), opportunities/training, and geographic location. The directory is available at https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/find-local-services.

REPORTING

In addition to addressing crises and stabilization upon identification of a potential trafficking victim, healthcare providers should contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline. This hotline also provides warm transfers of mandatory reporters' intakes to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), helps build intelligence on human trafficking in Texas, and continuously improves its referral directory of Texas resources for victims seeking assistance for themselves. There are more than 90 Texas service providers listed on the National Referral Directory, with more than 60 of those being listed publicly.

According to Texas Family Code 261.101, any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect (including human trafficking victimization) by any person is required to immediately make a report to law enforcement or DFPS [117]. Professionals who are licensed or certified by the state or who are employees of a facility licensed, certified, or operated by the state and who, in the normal course of official duties or duties for which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children are required to make reports within 48 hours; this includes physicians, nurses, social workers, counselors, and pharmacists. Reporting cannot be delegated.

ROLES AND LIMITATIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT INVOLVEMENT

Victims of human trafficking should be empowered with choice whenever possible, including the ability to determine whether to participate in the criminal justice process [100]. Cases involving abuse or neglect at the hands of a traditional caregiver may be investigated by the DFPS, but all other cases must be handled by a law enforcement agency [118]. For victims who choose to participate in the criminal justice process, safety and protection considerations apply.

There are limitations to law enforcement involvement, particularly with victims who may be reluctant to trust these figures. It is important that the law enforcement contact be trained and experienced in the intricacies of human trafficking and complex trauma. While building a criminal case and prosecuting perpetrators is important, measures should be taken to avoid re-traumatizing the victim.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROTOCOLS

Whenever possible, facilities should create trauma-informed organizational protocols to ensure that human trafficking survivors receive the best possible care. These protocols should include guidelines for appropriate assessment, documentation, reporting, intervention, and referral and may be incorporated into existing protocols for interacting with potential victims of child abuse, violence, and/or sexual assault.

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is a severe human rights violation. Because the roots of human trafficking are multifaceted, no one solution exists to eliminate this problem. Unfortunately, as the problem grows, practitioners will be confronted with the issue in their patient populations. Practitioners should be committed to the collaboration amongst disciplines to address poverty, racism, discrimination, and oppression in order to reduce the vulnerable positions of human trafficking victims and their families. Because of the social justice component in the codes of ethics of professionals such as physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors, all practitioners can play a key role in the individual, community, and systemic levels to help address this gross abuse of power. One way to begin is to educate oneself and one's respective disciplines about the global nature of human trafficking and the complex dynamics of the problem.

RESOURCES

NATIONAL

National Human Trafficking Hotline
https://humantraffickinghotline.org
1-888-373-7888
TTY: 711
Text: 233733

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign

U.S. Department of State
Office to Monitor and Combat
Trafficking in Persons
https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-foreign-assistance-humanitarian-affairs-and-religious-freedom/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/office-to-monitor-and-combat-trafficking-in-persons

Girls Education and Mentoring Services (GEMS)
https://www.gems-girls.org

Love146
https://love146.org

National Center for Missing
and Exploited Children
https://www.missingkids.org

Administration of Children and Families
Office on Trafficking in Persons
https://acf.gov/otip

Polaris Project
https://polarisproject.org

Shared Hope International
https://sharedhope.org

Truckers Against Trafficking
https://tatnonprofit.org

STATE

Children at Risk
https://childrenatrisk.org/anti-human-trafficking

Children Advocacy Centers of Texas
https://cactx.org

Office of the Texas Governor
Child Sex Trafficking Team
https://gov.texas.gov/organization/cjd/childsex-trafficking

Attorney General of Texas
https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/initiatives/human-trafficking-initiative

Texas Health and Human Services
https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/family-safety-resources/texas-human-trafficking-resource-center

LOCAL

To locate your county by DFPS region, please visit https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Contact_Us/offices.asp.

https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Contact_Us/offices.asp.
Organizations marked with an asterisk are faith-based.

DFPS Region 1 (Northwest)

Family Support Services of Amarillo
https://www.fss-ama.org

No Boundaries International*
https://www.nbint.org

Open Door Survivor Housing Lubbock*
https://opendoorlbk.org

Voice of Hope Lubbock Texas
https://voiceofhopetexas.org/sex-trafficking-info

DFPS Region 2 (Northwest)

Taylor County Victim's Assistance Division
https://www.taylorcounty.texas.gov/758/Victims-Assistance-Division

Wichita County Victim Assistance
https://wichitacountytx.com/victims-services

DFPS Region 3 (Dallas Fort Worth)

Catholic Charities – Dallas*
https://www.ccdallas.org

Mosaic
https://mosaicservices.org

Jonathan's Place
https://www.jpkids.org

New Friends New Life, Dallas
https://www.newfriendsnewlife.org

Promise House Inc., Dallas*
https://promisehouse.org

Refuge for Women, North Texas*
https://refugeforwomen.org/north-texas

Traffick911
https://www.traffick911.com

Unbound
https://unboundnow.org

Rescue Her - Euless, TX
https://www.rescueher.org

DFPS Region 4 (East Central)

Texas Legal Services Center
https://www.tlsc.org

DFPS Region 5 (East Central)

Center for Success and Independence - Houston
https://tcsi.org

Crisis Center of Southeast Texas
https://www.crisiscenterofsoutheasttx.org

Jefferson County Victims' Assistance Center
https://jeffersoncountytx.gov/da/VictimsAssist.htm

Children at Risk, Houston
https://childrenatrisk.org/anti-human-trafficking

For the Silent, Tyler, TX
https://www.forthesilent.org

Houston Area Women's Center
https://hawc.org

YMCA of Greater Houston
https://ymcahouston.org

The Landing – Houston
https://thelanding.org

Redeemed Ministries, Spring, TX*
https://www.redeemedtx.org

DFPS Region 6 (Houston)

Free the Captives Houston*
http://www.freethecaptiveshouston.com

Houston Area Women's Center
https://hawc.org

The Key2Free
https://www.thekey2free.org

United Against Human Trafficking
https://uaht.org

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
https://catholiccharities.org

DFPS Region 7 (East Central)

American Gateways, Austin
https://www.americangateways.org

Asian Family Support Services of Austin
https://www.afssaustin.org

Central Texas Youth Services Bureau, Belton/Temple
https://www.centraltexasyouthservices.com

Arms of Hope, Austin*
https://armsofhope.org

Unbound
https://unboundnow.org

The SAFE Alliance – Austin
https://www.safeaustin.org/our-services/face-to-face-support/support-for-people-who-have-been-exploited

DFPS Region 8 (South)

Freedom Youth Project Foundation
https://www.freedomyouthproject.org

The Rape Crisis Center, San Antonio
https://rapecrisis.com

Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)
https://raicestexas.org

Roy Maas Youth Alternatives (RMYA)
https://www.rmya.org

St. Jude's Ranch for Children (SJRC) Texas - San Antonio Office
https://sjrctexas.org

DFPS Region 9 (Northwest)

Ector County District Attorney Office
https://www.co.ector.tx.us/page/ector.District.Attorney

Midland County District Attorney Office
https://www.co.midland.tx.us/173/District-Attorney

DFPS Region 10 (Northwest)

Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
https://www.las-americas.org

El Paso Center for Children
https://epccinc.org

Paso Del Norte Center of Hope
https://www.pdncoh.org

Salvation Army of El Paso*
https://southernusa.salvationarmy.org/elpaso

El Paso Child Guidance Center
https://epcgc.org

DFPS Region 11 (South)

Catholic Charities of Corpus Christi Texas*
https://www.catholiccharities-cc.org

Coastal Bend Coalition Against Modern Day Slavery
https://cbcamds.wordpress.com

Mujeres Unidas/Women Together Foundation, Inc.
https://mujeresunidas.org

Rio Grande Valley Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition
https://www.facebook.com/RGVAHTF

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