

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: GLOBAL UPDATES, TRENDS, AND THE ROLE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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Overview

- Understanding TIP
- Intersection of health and TIP
- Health Risks of TIP
- Research

Trafficking = Modern Slavery

“Faceless,
temporary, highly
profitable, legally
concealed, and
completely
ruthless”

- Kevin Bales

Definition

- Palermo Protocol¹ UN 2000 is the most widely accepted definition - defines trafficking as an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them.
- Key features involve **movement or confinement** of an individual, **removing personal agency**, with coercion and exploitation - usually **for financial profit or other gain**
- An individual need not leave his/her home town to be trafficked.

Domestic Trafficking: within USA

- ⦿ Most TIP victims in USA are Americans
 - Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)
- ⦿ Trafficking information & Hotline
 - 1-888-3737-888

Estimating Numbers

- UNODC, IOM, ILO, TIP report all different
- 2012 ILO estimate: 20.9 million people trafficked (adults + children)
- Different groups using different indicators and parameters in defining numbers
 - Cases with convictions vs cases filed vs estimates on population, etc
- Different countries have different laws and definitions of trafficking

Where does it happen?

- Trafficking in persons occurs in every country
- Countries may be a source, transit, and/or destination

Forms of trafficking⁴

- Forced labor
- Debt bondage
- Sex trafficking
- Forced child labor, child soldiers, child sex trafficking and other sexual services
- Forced marriages
- Involuntary domestic service

Who is at risk?

- Impoverished
- Migrants
- Minority groups
- People with disabilities
- Refugees, Internally Displaced Peoples, stateless people
- Victims of humanitarian crises: natural disasters, armed conflicts, etc

Stages of Human Trafficking

Pre-departure

Transit and Travel

Destination

Detention, deportation,
criminal investigation

Integration/re-integration



Importance of Health Care in TIP

- “Monitoring the health status of survivors of trafficking, the care they receive, and their access to medical services will be crucial in the future to hold signatories of the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] accountable and protect this vulnerable group.”¹
- “*Caring For Trafficked Persons*”, a comprehensive guide for health professionals, recognizes the dearth of data regarding health care and human trafficking²

The gap in health care and TIP

- ⦿ Currently a paucity (**but growing!**) of health care involvement as well as health care research that addresses the health needs of trafficked people around the world.
- ⦿ Two reasons:
 - A lack of recognition by health care and counter-trafficking community that TIP is a health care issue.
 - The difficulties and complexities of doing health research
- ⦿ Not necessarily a lack of professionals who want to get involved but for lack of an organized and funded effort.
- ⦿ Health care may lack support from organizations because it can be expensive and long-term, and (in many places) lacks competence

Health care and human trafficking

- ① Health care intersects along the entire spectrum of human trafficking stages
- ① However, very little data exists to inform our interventions.
 - Health Risks
 - Identification of victims
 - Effective advocates
 - Prevention strategies
- ① It is important to know about larger trends in order to know best how to intervene

The Intersection

- On the “frontline”, health providers can play important role identifying and helping trafficked persons
- Very few places where someone from outside has opportunity to interact with victim
 - Law enforcement
 - Healthcare
 - Social work
- In one study, 1 in 4 victims reported they had been in contact with a health care provider while being trafficked³

Health Risks of TIP

- Baseline (prior to being trafficked) poor health conditions and/or underlying diseases
- Crowded & unsanitary living conditions
- Poor nutrition
- Social/cultural isolation & restriction
- Lack of access to health professionals for preventive services or treatment of illness
- Growth and development problems in children
- The factors above all contribute to the complexity of presentations and management due to these **compounding co-morbidities**

Roles of the health care professional

- Understanding unique concerns and issues of survivors
- Prevention
- Identification
- Research
- Advocacy
- Service
- Caring for TIP victims involves much more than clinical care

Health Risks Categories

1. Infectious
2. Non-infectious
3. Reproductive Health
4. Violence
5. Mental health
6. Substance abuse

Child Health

- Same 6 categories
- Suffer cumulative impact of underlying health problems and health behavior of mothers
- Under-recognized as victims if living with trafficked parent, or may be part of child labor
- May be separated from parent/caretaker
- Particularly sensitive to toxic environment: drugs, abuse, violence
- MCH consequences – pre/post-natal

Physical Symptoms⁷

- ⦿ Fatigue, weight loss
- ⦿ Neurological
- ⦿ Gastrointestinal
- ⦿ Cardiovascular
- ⦿ Sexual, Reproductive health
- ⦿ Musculoskeletal
- ⦿ Eyes, ears, URI
- ⦿ Dermatological

Reproductive Health

“...women who have been trafficked often prioritize their sexual and reproductive health needs, and that women’s physical and psychological well-being can be positively affected by addressing these needs.”

Mental Health

- PTSD, neuroses, psychoses, anxiety, depression, somatization, eating disorders
- Neuro/psych/behavioral disorders in children
- India: 90% women clinically depressed
- Suicide: 41% of prostituted girls in U.S
- May be the most important contributor to morbidity

**“[I am] scared for no reason.
I think that someone is
behind my door, window.
Someone will find me, pick
me up, beat me and kill me.
I have run off and they are
looking for me.
My mood changes all
the time. I cannot
control my mind.”**

Difficulties in Providing Health Care

- Lack of knowledge about trafficked people's health needs
- Lack of proper specialists: e.g. forensics, mental health, well-trained interpreters
- Complex social and legal situation; what and where health care may take place; cross-disciplinary cooperation often complicated (differing objectives)
- Payment/cost issues
- Lack of access of health services by trafficked people due to restricted mobility or no knowledge of how to access services
- Long-term healing, chronic care, and follow up necessary, but difficult due to reasons stated above

Trauma Informed Care

- Is the holistic approach to someone who has suffered complex trauma, or “a type of trauma that occurs repeatedly and cumulatively, usually over a period of time and within specific relationships and contexts”
- Takes a non-judgmental, caring approach
- Incorporates cultural, gender, and age-appropriate care
- Understands that a patient’s vague or inconsistent or belligerent answers may reflect their reaction to trauma and not intentionally difficult

The survivor perspective: voices from SE Asia

- ⦿ Afraid of exposing his/her body to more strangers.
- ⦿ Often have to endure multiple interviews and exams at various stages of care or for forensic purposes.
- ⦿ Health professionals are not aware of psychosomatic illnesses – focus only on the body, therefore treatment falls short of need.
- ⦿ Past traumatic experiences in a health care facility creates fear to return for exams/testing
- ⦿ Health professionals refusing to allow support staff to be present with survivor during exams.

Prevention & Advocacy

- Be aware of TIP activity that may be occurring in your area, and how your patients may be affected
- Advocate for and participate in survivor services
- Participate on task force coalitions, community groups, and local organizations that address TIP issues
- Understand the what makes people vulnerable to being trafficked and address those root issues.
- Listen to survivors; listen to your patients

Outreach

- Volunteer at a clinic that serves vulnerable people – may impact the life of someone before they are trafficked, or you may meet someone already trapped in a dire situation.
- Homeless shelters, free clinics for indigent, shelters for victims of violence.



Aftercare services

- Offer health care services to those caring for trafficking survivors
- Provide trauma-informed and holistic services
- May help develop protocols, procedures, and evaluation & monitoring schemes
- Train aftercare staff in basic health care practices
- Forensic medicine practices (?)

Research and Public Health

- ***“The business of public health is to take what is accepted and make it unacceptable.”***
 - Bill Foege, former director of CDC
- “NO DATA NO PROBLEM”
- Evidence informs interventions and programs (evidence-based medicine)
- Research can drive policies and generate funding

Research

- ⦿ Those studied are most often those who have been rescued, but this doesn't necessarily reflect the true demographic of trafficked people worldwide.
 - Tend to be women & children rescued from sex trafficking
- ⦿ “If we do not correct this, we may create a vicious cycle whereby we continue to support our misconceptions about victims by the way in which we provide assistance, and therefore continue to ignore the needs of populations which do not fit within our framework.”
 - (USAID “Best Practice 2008)

Barriers to data collection

- Access to survivors is limited and can be difficult to gain trust for honest responses
- Lack of understanding regarding research may affect organizations' willingness to cooperate in a study
- Uniform data collection not used; study methods may be substandard
- Failure among organizations to see mutual goals, unwilling to collaborate or share information
- Counter-trafficking organizations are not trained or funded to collect data; and may not know how to use the information
- Lack of funding for research; or grant process is prohibitively complex and daunting
- Location for study is not conducive; may even be hostile to data collection

Focus Group Rural India

Research ideas

- Screening, diagnosis and treatment of HPV/cervical dysplasia among women exploited as girls
- Mental health problems and effective treatments among different cultural groups in different settings
- Health problems of trafficked people
- Understand risk factors such as social, cultural, economic, immigration status; language barriers, etc
- Evaluation and monitoring of aftercare programs to ensure best practice and outcomes

Prevention Strategies

- ⦿ Defining social determinants in assessing risk
 - SE Asia
- ⦿ Supply chain transparency
 - California law
- ⦿ Corporate social responsibility
 - ECPAT's Code of Conduct
- ⦿ Community awareness and action
 - Foot & Vanek (MANGOs), 3-3-5 Campaign
- ⦿ Fair trade movements

Conclusion

- Human Trafficking has implications for individual as well as a public health
- Health care is central in the restoration of a trafficked person
- Human trafficking is a complex health, social, and legal issue – problems are compounded
- Health professionals and organizations, need to be involved in prevention, research, monitoring, developing treatment guidelines, and evaluation in addition to direct patient care
- Need funding, organizational support and political will to make global difference

Resources

- ◉ CMDA TIP Taskforce online CME
- ◉ Caring for Trafficked Persons, Guidelines for Health Professionals. IOM. 2009.
- ◉ TIP Report 2012. US State Dept.
 - grades countries
 - UN definition
 - Political
 - Annually in June



Relentless

- Consultant to organizations that address abuse, trafficking, and exploitation
- Outreach clinics
- Develop protocols and procedures for organizations in developing countries
- Train aftercare staff
- Based in Chiang Mai, Thailand
- go.relentless@gmail.com
- www.gorelentless.wordpress.com

References

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3. *Turning Pain into Power: Trafficking Survivors' Perspectives on Early Intervention Strategies*. Family Violence Prevention Fund in Partnership with the World Childhood Foundation, March 2005