

Study highlights need for education and training to help human trafficking victims

June 26 2017

Healthcare professionals are in a unique position to identify and rescue victims of human trafficking. Nearly 88 percent of them seek medical treatment during captivity, and of those, 68 percent of them are seen in the emergency department (ED). Unfortunately, many victims slip through the cracks and remain "hidden." A study released today in the Emergency Nurses Association's *Journal of Emergency Nursing* aims to help emergency nurses better identify victims of human trafficking. The study details an evidence-based project that shines a spotlight on the importance of formal education, screening, and treatment protocols for emergency department personnel to guide identification and rescue victims of human trafficking.

"Interestingly, we found that not only were [formal education](#) and treatment methods effective strategies to improve recognition and save human [trafficking](#) victims, but they also increased the identification of other forms of abuse such as domestic violence and sexual assault," said study author Amber Egyud, DNP, RN, Chief Nursing Officer, Vice President of Patient Care Services at Forbes Hospital, Allegheny Health Network.

A multidisciplinary team implemented the project at a level two trauma center in a southwestern Pennsylvania community hospital ED where no human trafficking victims had ever been identified before. The team taught ED staff a two-pronged identification approach: medical red flags created by a risk assessment tool embedded into the electronic health record and a silent notification process. They also advised on the proper

protocol to ensure the successful rescue and safety of the victims.

With the use of the screening tools, the healthcare team that completed the education and training identified 38 potential victims during a five-month period, and approximately 20 percent of them accepted rescue from their abusive living situation. Victims may decline intervention for a variety of reasons, including fear for personal safety, inability to support themselves or emotional ties to the abuser. These victims often engage in multiple encounters with healthcare providers before accepting help. As a result of this project, the healthcare team identified and rescued one victim of trafficking. In addition, 75 percent of the participating ED personnel reported that the education improved their competence level in recognizing victims of human trafficking.

"Emergency nurses are often the first healthcare professional involved in the care of a trafficking victim and are the vital link between recognition and rescue of the patient," said ENA President Karen K. Wiley, MSN, RN, CEN. "We have an opportunity to save lives in a whole new way, but it requires proactive measures aimed at educational awareness and training. This is why we will have multiple educational sessions on [human trafficking](#) at our Emergency Nursing 2017 conference."

More information: "Emergency Nursing 2017" is September 13 - 16 in St. Louis, Mo., and includes educational sessions titled "Human Trafficking in the Emergency Department: Navigating Medical Forensic Protocols," "Sex Trafficking: It's Near You," "See, Pull, Cut the Threads of Violence" and "In an ED Near You: Victims of Human Trafficking. www.ena.org/practice-research/...man-Trafficking.aspx

Provided by Emergency Nurses Association

Citation: Study highlights need for education and training to help human trafficking victims (2017, June 26) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-highlights-human-trafficking-victims.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.