

Mayo medical student jump-starts curriculum to identify human trafficking

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Human trafficking is a growing international public health concern. An estimated 400,000 people in the U.S. are affected, with as many as 88% of victims having seen a health care professional while they were being trafficked.

As [human trafficking](#) evolves as a health concern, medical schools are starting to include the topic in education. However, it's still in the early stages, says a Mayo Clinic study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. The research was led by third-year medical [student](#) at Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine, Jennifer Talbott, who suggested that human [trafficking training](#) be included in the curriculum at the school.

Working with the medical [school](#) faculty, Talbott helped develop coursework to train fellow students to identify and provide resources to potential victims of human trafficking. Talbott's adviser, Juliana Kling, M.D., a Mayo Clinic women's health internist, says training in identifying and providing resources to human trafficking victims is essential for [medical school students](#).

"If we aren't trained to identify that they are victims, then they will continue being trafficked," says Dr. Kling, who is co-medical director of the Student Community Clinic at Mayo Clinic in Arizona. This clinic teaches the social determinants of health in a clinical setting to second-year [medical students](#).

Many organizations have called for medical schools to train students to

recognize the signs of trafficking and care for these patients. However, few standardized training resources are available, according to Talbott's study. So far, only four medical schools have published about their curricula specific to training on human trafficking.

The study points out that a robust educational curriculum "has the potential to close remaining educational gaps, allowing improved identification and treatment of those suffering from sex trafficking."

The study showcased the lack of information and training available to medical students by returning a low number of results when searching for published educational resources. Only 11 articles were identified in the study.

"This highlights an opportunity for improvement, since sex trafficking has become a priority on the public health agenda," says Talbott. "M.D. and D.O. (medical) schools could look to the current published curricula or consider sharing resources to identify an educational curriculum on sex trafficking that can be integrated into their existing programs."

The study also found that among the limited published resources available for [medical school](#) students, there were discrepancies in how the material addressed legal and security issues for victims.

Talbott and the Mayo Clinic Arizona American Medical Women's Association chapter also provide free training to classmates and other [health care](#) professionals around Arizona in coordination with Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans of the American Medical Women's Association. This training includes simulated patient experiences and lectures that are now integrated into Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine curriculum. Though in its early stages, the training has received positive feedback from other medical students.

"Medical students go into medicine to help patients, and it is our duty to teach them how to identify and provide guidance to victims of trafficking," says Dr. Kling. "The curriculum we are developing will hopefully close this important gap."

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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