The Health Impact of Child Trafficking

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Objectives

• Be familiar with the physical and mental health impact of CST
• Understand the challenges in providing mental health treatment to trafficked youth
• Be familiar with the public health approach to human trafficking
• Be aware of various strategies for preventing child trafficking
Sex and Labor Trafficking

Do Victims Seek Medical Care?

- 82.5% seen at the local children’s hospital within past year

- 42.9% had received health care within the 2 months prior to identification

- Victims seek care in variety of settings
  - 63% Hospital/ED
  - 57% any type of clinic
  - 30% Planned Parenthood
  - 23% Regular doctor

1 Horner 2017; 2 Varma 2015; 3 Lederer & Wetzel, 2014
Mental Health Conditions

- 93.6% Mental health disorder

Horner, et al. 2017
Mental Health

- 62 runaway, sexually exploited adolescents at CAC

![Mental Health Issues]

Edinburgh, 2015
Medical Conditions

- 47.6% Multiple STIs
- 22.2% Pregnancy
- 34.9% Obesity (national ave: 17.6% adolescents)
- 28.6% Chronic medical problems (asthma most common)
- 28.6% Developmental delay/IEP/speech delay

Horner, et al. 2017
What About Access to Healthcare?

• Services used:
  – Reproductive (esp. PP)
  – Emergency
  – Primary care
  – Mental health

• Facilitators to care:
  – Availability of services
  – Youth knowledge of STIs
  – Motivation to stay healthy

“I have to get checked out, because without Your vagina you’re worthless in the game.”

Ijadi-Maghsoodi, 2018
Barriers to Healthcare

• Feeling judged
  – Healthcare providers who
    • Make no effort to understand patient’s life
    • Offer unwanted opinions

• Concerns about confidentiality

• General fears
  – Traffickers
  – Diagnoses
  – Police

• Perceived low quality of care

• Self-reliance

“I feel like they’re hearing me but they’re not hearing me… ain’t nobody’s ears really open… what is the point of me telling you something?”

“You should be in school.”

Ijadi-Maghsoodi, 2018
What do other survivors have to say?

• Barriers to Care:
  – Trafficker barriers
    • Restricted access to healthcare
    • Often accompanied victim to health facility
  – System barriers:
    • More concerned about being paid than providing care
    • Long wait times
  – Victim barriers:
    • Felt intimidated by HCPs
    • Substance use a greater priority than healthcare
    • Lacked money to pay for care
    • Can’t afford to take time away from work to seek care

Chisolm-Straker 2016; Ravi 2017a; Baldwin 2011; Ravi 2017b; Lederer, 2014
Recommendations

• Be friendly, open, empathic, compassionate, nonjudgmental
• Emphasize safety and confidentiality when screening
• Observe body language for cues to identify fear, anxiety, distress
• Approach issue of exploitation directly, through sensitive questioning
• Normalize the questions so patient doesn’t feel targeted
• Don’t push patient to answer questions

Baldwin 2011; Ravi 2017b
More Recommendations

- Be aware of own reactions to disclosure; don’t demonstrate negative emotions
- Don’t refuse care because no Medicaid
- Increase non-medications methods for MH support

Baldwin 2011; Ravi 2017b
Exam and Diagnostic Evaluation

Assess overall health, nutrition

Assess and treat acute/chronic conditions

Assess development (+/-)

Obtain sexual assault evidence kit (+/-)

Document injuries, genital(extra-genital)

Offer STI and pregnancy testing/prophylaxis

Consider testing for endemic diseases of home country

Offer drug testing

Patient assent is critical!!
Make Health-Related Referrals For Ongoing Care

- Child Advocacy Center or SANE exam
- Behavioral health assessment and treatment
- Substance abuse assessment and rehab
- OB/GYN care
- Primary care provider Ongoing care
- STI testing
- Family planning
- HPV vaccine
- Anticipatory guidance
- Immunizations
- Developmental assessment (child)
What Mental Health Treatment is Available?
Challenges to Mental Health Treatment

• Many trafficked youth experienced complex trauma
• Difficulties engaging youth in treatment
• Trauma-bonding or denying exploitation
• Often significant avoidance, externalizing behaviors
• Difficulty engaging caregivers
• Runaway behavior
• Co-morbid substance misuse

Cohen, 2017
Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: TF-CBT

Multiple trauma types

- Sexual abuse
- Witness to violence
- Disaster
- Traumatic grief

- Multiple impacts of trauma

PTSD
Depression
Behavior problems
Attachment problems

Human Trafficking as a Public Health Problem
Traditional Views of HT

“It’s a crime! Leave it to law enforcement.”

“It’s a social problem. Just one more of society’s ills.”
Why a public health approach?

Focus on:

- Social/Economic determinants of health
- Surveillance
- Risk & protective factors
- Spectrum of violence
- Changing Social Norms

DHHS, SOAR, 2016
Why a public health approach?
Focus on....

- Evaluation & monitoring
- Cultural sensitivity at all levels
- Builds community capacity
- Engages community stakeholders

DHHS, SOAR, 2016
Focus on Prevention

Society

Community

Relationship

Individual
Prevention

- Education, referrals to youth, families
  - Online safety, human trafficking risks
  - Healthy relationships
  - Service referrals to address vulnerabilities, reduce harm
Child-focused Programs on CST & CSA Prevention

• Not A #Number: Love 146
• Speak Up Be Safe: Child Help USA
• Child Safety Matters: Monique Burr Foundation
• Second Step, Child Protection Unit: Committee For Children
• Healthy Relationship Project: Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
• Think First & Stay Safe: Child Lures Prevention
• Teen Lures TV News Cast School Program: Teen Lures Prevention
Curriculum Components

• These curricula address vulnerabilities:
  – Self-esteem, resilience, and bullying
  – How media effects our perception/expectation of ourselves and others
  – Healthy and unhealthy relationships
  – Empathy and support
  – Navigating and avoiding risky situations
  – Empowering youth
School Response to Child Sex Trafficking

- May take many forms (student as trafficker, recruiter, or victim)
- Develop protocol for response
  - Suspected recruitment of peers
  - Suspected victim of exploitation
  - Confirmed victim of exploitation

"Not all traffickers are adults: A suburban Minneapolis high school cheerleader was arrested for allegedly recruiting and pimping a younger student by creating an online ad and driving the victim to potential customers."

—Star Tribune
Targeting Potential Buyers/Traffickers

• Programs for boys to change cultural attitudes (CAASE Chicago)
  – http://caase.org/prevention

• “John’s Schools” for identified buyers
  – Controversial
What can you do to prevent victimization?
Reduce Risk

Address Vulnerability Factors

- Provide Emotional Support
- Build Self-Esteem & Resilience
- Intervene in Bullying
- Help Identify Risky Situations
- Teach Internet Safety
- Educate on CST and SA
- Give Safety Tips
- Talk About Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships
Practice Safety

“What would you do if....”

A friend tells you about an easy way of making money, ‘it’s not really sex, just blow jobs’ and ‘everyone is doing it’. ‘Wanna make some money?’

You meet someone online. They seem nice. They understand what you’re going through, when nobody else does. One night they start talking about sex, and ask you to send a naked photo.

You’ve been at a party, started hanging out with an older guy, and he offers to ‘go somewhere’ and then take you home.
Addressing Vulnerabilities in the Family

- Violence
- Homophobia
- Substance use
- Poverty
- Family instability
- Untreated mental health disorders
- Homelessness
Primary Prevention: Community

• Need to address
  • Community violence
  • Poverty
  • Lack of resources
  • Lack of community cohesion
  • Tolerance of trafficking, violence
  • Lack of awareness of HT and its harms

• Encourage community responsibility for safety
Primary Prevention: Societal

• Work to change societal norms
  • Sexualization of girls/pimp culture
  • Gender bias
  • Acceptance of inequality, marginalization
  • Lack of recognition of child rights
  • Tolerance of forced labor
  • Homophobia
What Prevention Activities are Occurring in Tulsa?
• Are programs being **evaluated**?
• What are **barriers** to successful implementation?
• How could you **improve** these efforts?
• What **else** could be done? Legislation? Advocacy?
• How could you improve services to address **vulnerabilities**?
Conclusions

• Child trafficking is associated with many adverse physical and mental health effects

• Public health approach allows a comprehensive, systematic strategy for prevention and intervention

• Multiple levels of prevention efforts available
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