Development of a Human Trafficking Flowsheet for Medical Forensic Examiners

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BACKGROUND

Human trafficking is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. An estimated 88% of sex trafficking victims have had contact with a healthcare professional while they are being trafficked (Lederer, 2014).

The Missouri Hospital Human Trafficking Task Force recommends referring a trafficked person to healthcare providers who can address immediate medical needs, infection exposures, chronic health conditions, forensic documentation and evidence collection. Medical forensic examiners, including sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) and forensic nurses, have specific knowledge and trauma-informed skills to holistically address many of these needs. These include crisis intervention, knowledge of mandatory reporting laws and low enforcement reporting options, forensic photography, specimen collection, chain of custody, legal considerations, community partner collaboration, and discharge planning. Medical forensic examiners are trained to identify and address unique challenges and psychological issues experienced by vulnerable populations at high risk for being trafficked (ANA & IAFN, 2017).

MEASURES and ANALYSIS

1) 18 peer-reviewed, evidence-based publications, stakeholder and other resources about medical forensic care for patients experiencing human trafficking were reviewed. 2) Current program flowsheets were used to construct a reproducible and similar format. A draft flowsheet was created for patients experiencing different forms of human trafficking. 3) A multidisciplinary team of experts convened with representation from the Missouri Attorney General’s Human Trafficking Taskforce, Federal Bureau of Investigation Human Trafficking Division, Missouri Highway Patrol Human Trafficking Investigation Team, survivor advocacy agencies, mobile human trafficking crisis intervention agencies, long-term restoration programs, and forensic nurses. 4) The multidisciplinary team provided feedback regarding trauma-informed considerations, appropriate terminology, flowsheet order, investigative concerns, medical care, mental health, crisis intervention, advocacy support, and short and long-term safety planning.

The Missouri Hospital Human Trafficking Task Force

METHODS

Flowsheets are electronic medical record (EMR) integrated tools developed to help clinicians document patient data in an organized and comprehensive manner. The SAF/Eta website, supported by the International Association of Forensic Nurses, is one of the most common support sites for examples of medical forensic assessments, consents, and technical support (SAF/Eta, 2022). While there are exceptional examples provided for pediatric abuse, pediatric sexual abuse/assault, domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and suspect medical forensic examination or reports, there is not currently a resource for medical forensic human trafficking medical forensic examination flowsheet or report forms (SAF/Eta, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

Development of a Human Trafficking Flowsheet provides medical forensic examiners a tool to address the unique challenges and needs of patients who experience human trafficking. Utilizing multidisciplinary human trafficking specialists enriched the effectiveness of the final flowsheet and helped support the learning needs of those using the tool. Implementing the flowsheet for a trial period and obtaining multimethod feedback further refined the usefulness and comprehensiveness of the flowsheet.

REFERENCES

