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Human Trafficking

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Human trafficking is a human rights violation affecting individuals of all ages and has significant implications for the physical, sexual, and psychological health of those affected. Trafficking victims are treated for acute injuries and illnesses in emergency departments more often than in any other health care facility and thus emergency physicians are in the best position to assess, intervene, and refer for assistance. Identification and assessment of victims can be difficult, as human trafficking can encompass abuse in many different forms including neglect, intimidation, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse.

ACEP recommends that:

- Emergency physicians be familiar with potential signs, symptoms and indicators of human trafficking in both adult and pediatric patients.
- Emergency personnel maintain a high index of suspicion when evaluating patients of any age who appear to be at risk for abuse and violence and assess for specific indicators of trafficking.
- In order to minimize the potential for re-traumatization, potential victims of human trafficking should be evaluated using an age appropriate, culturally relevant and survivor-centered approach with an understanding of how trauma may affect an individual's response to care.
- Hospitals and emergency departments (EDs) have protocols in place to address the medical, psychological, safety, and legal needs of the victims of human trafficking. As many of the needs of victims of human trafficking may not be addressed in an ED visit, this includes referral to appropriate resources.
- Emergency practitioners be aware of institutional protocols and resources to guide a safe and multidisciplinary approach to helping identified victims, including appropriate referrals.
- Emergency medical services (EMS), medical schools, and emergency medicine residency curricula should include education and training in recognition, assessment, documentation, and interventions for patients surviving human trafficking.
- ED and EMS staff receive ongoing training and education in the identification, management, and documentation of human trafficking victims.

- Hospitals, EDs, and EMS maintain appropriate education regarding state and federal legal requirements for reporting human trafficking, with particular attention to mandated reporting duties related to child abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of persons with disability.
- Emergency personnel be afforded protected or anonymous reporting.
- Emergency physicians give adult victims of trafficking autonomy to choose when and how to report or seek help.

ACEP supports:

- Appropriate measures to prevent human trafficking in the community.
- Hospital, ED, and EMS participation in collaborative interdisciplinary approaches for the recognition, assessment, and assistance of human trafficking victims. These approaches include the development of policies and protocols that account for the potential need to interface with outside entities such as local government agencies, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant legal and social service organizations.
- Epidemiological research regarding the incidence and prevalence of human trafficking, as well as clinical research to identify best practice approaches and interventions in the prevention, detection, assessment, and assistance of human trafficking victims.