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A First Response: Educating Paramedics to Identify Signs of Human Trafficking

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UWill Discover Proposal Abstract

Title: A First Response: Educating Paramedics to Identify Signs of Human Trafficking

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Submission Type: Poster Presentation

Abstract

Introduction

Human trafficking (HT) affects approximately 21 million victims, representing a serious public health concern exacerbated by missed intervention opportunities. Targeted training has previously resulted in increased victim identification. While intervention with hospital staff increased HT awareness, less is known about prehospital personnel, specifically emergency medical services (EMS) personnel. This gap is problematic, as EMS personnel are uniquely positioned to conduct patient and environmental assessments that provide critical information for victim identification. This study evaluates a training module specifically designed for EMS professionals.

Methods

The online training module was developed in collaboration with Florida State University. Data were collected anonymously using voluntary pre- and post-tests. Participants were asked to identify HT indicators, previous HT training, frequency of suspected HT contact, and demographics. In total, 237 participants completed at least 80% of the questions. Data were analyzed using descriptive and bivariate statistics.

Results

Preliminary results suggest training effectively educates EMS professionals to recognize signs of HT. Paired-samples t-tests demonstrate increased suspicion of HT for 26/27 indicators; the likelihood of suspecting HT before ($m=107.23$, $SD=16.23$) versus after training ($m=118.61$, $SD=15.90$) based on summed values of all indicators was statistically significant; $t(208)=-9.129$, $p<.001$.

Conclusions

This research falls under the Grand Theme of 'Building Viable, Healthy, and Safe Communities' by describing efforts to raise the visibility of HT among paramedics. Training may provide knowledge and confidence to report HT to resources equipped to effectively intervene. Training EMS personnel in HT will help fight modern day slavery and create healthier and safer communities.