Human trafficking impacts individual health (e.g. traumatic injury, infections, unwanted pregnancy, malnutrition, exposure to toxins, PTSD and depression) and results in family strife/disintegration, community bias/discrimination, business drive for exploitable/unpaid labor, and societal expectations of cheap consumer goods. For all of these reasons, human trafficking is a public health issue.

**Human Trafficking**

**Labor Trafficking:**
“Individuals are compelled to work or provide services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.”

**Sex Trafficking:**
“Individuals are compelled to engage in commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.”

— Office on Trafficking in Persons

**Effect of COVID-19**

New public social mandates (social distancing, ‘shelter in place’ orders, school/business closures, event/meeting cancellations) have limited in-person interaction and expanded online communication. They have also increased unemployment, poverty, homelessness, and vulnerability. All of these social changes will likely increase the prevalence of human trafficking.

— “Impact of Covid-19 on Human Trafficking”

Join health care’s movement to end trafficking, from a public health perspective: http://healtrafficking.org/ & www.nolatrafficking.org
HUMAN TRAFFICKING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

How can health care professionals and other service providers prevent trafficking amidst social distancing efforts?
- Assess high risk patients for trafficking (occupational injuries, substance use patterns, mental health presentations)
- Address social determinants of health and connect patients with resources they need
- Educate other health professionals on trafficking
- Build health systems protocols to respond to trafficking
- Engage with isolated individuals regularly via secure telecommunication
- Teach families to spot abuse and avenues of recruitment into forced labor and the commercial sex industry
- Conduct Know Your Rights trainings to increase awareness of exploitative circumstances (forced labor)
- Promote harm reduction strategies

What resources are available to individuals at risk of suffering violence?
- National Human Trafficking Hotline: Call 1-888-3737-888 or text INFO or HELP to “BEFREE” (233733)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800.656.HOPE (4673)
- Trans Lifeline staffed exclusively by trans operators with policy against non-consensual active rescue: 1-877-565-8860
- National Parent Helpline emotional support and advocacy for parents: 1-855-2736.
- Utilize online recovery options such as NA-recovery.org, eatingdisordersanonymous.org, aa.org

What organizational strategies can assist in client/patient support during this pandemic?
- Expand digital avenues for innovative engagement with clients
- Evaluate for new client needs/vulnerabilities arising as a consequence of reduced access to opportunities/services
- Help clients safety plan for themselves and their families
- Integrate client voice and input into program design
- Institute intentional self-care to combat secondary and vicarious trauma
- Coordinate sustainability planning and transition planning in case of provider illness

References:

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