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Introduction & Purpose

Human trafficking violates human dignity and is a form of modern slavery. The exploitation of vulnerable and impoverished individuals is an international nightmare, occurring in communities throughout the world.

According to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010 and the General Assembly's 2017 affirming commitment to end trafficking, grass-root community partnerships and individuals' anti-trafficking actions are critical in influencing change and responding to victims' needs.

Nurses are central to the solution to create awareness and prevention in the acknowledgment that today human persons are bought and sold like farm animals.

The purpose of this poster is three-fold: (1) describe the ethical responsibilities of nurses to address the reality of trafficking in their community and across the globe (2) identify how moral agency can strengthen victim centered nursing practice, and (3) discuss how nursing advocacy and responsiveness can foster collaborative community based health care services to trafficked victims.

Moral Agency

According to Kantian ethics, moral agents act for the sake of the moral law and respect basic moral standards that translate into effective actions (Velleman, 2009).

The recognition of the debasement of the human person requires all nurses to recognize that human trafficking is a human rights and global health issue and effective nursing actions must be meticulously observed.

Moral agency is the capacity to be ethical and to do the ethically right thing for the right reasons (Taylor, n.d.).

Global Report on Trafficking

According to the United Nations, (2018) most of the victims detected across the world are females; mainly adult women, but also increasingly girls. More than half of the victims of trafficking for forced labor are men. It is estimated that 12.3 million people in the world are living as human trafficking victims.

Human trafficking deprives victims of their human dignity. To deface human dignity is to deny a person or a group of people of their unique sacredness present in each human person (Mitchell, 2016). Upholding human dignity is a hallmark of nursing practice and requires nurses to advocate for voiceless trafficked human persons.

Nurses are in a unique position to encounter trafficked victims. The first step is for all nurses to acknowledge the realities of trafficking in their communities. This form of modern day slavery is a reality and must be confronted by nurses. The key to addressing human trafficking is a multi-faceted approach that begins with nursing assessment:

- ☐ Identification: includes home address, date, time, current location
- ☐ Accompaniment: relationship, rapport, age differences
- ☐ Chief complaint
- ☐ Suspicious injuries of abuse
- ☐ Medical history: gaps, immunizations
- ☐ Lack of dental care
- ☐ Mental health status
- ☐ Unusual watchfulness
- ☐ Tattoos: quality, pattern – dollar signs, crude terms, location, gang branding

The implementation of a comprehensive care model addressing the physical health, mental health and safety needs of trafficked victims (Twigg, 2017; Shandro et al, 2016) are the catalyzing elements of ethical care for the advancement of collaborative nursing practice.

Discussion

A victim-centered approach that encompasses moral agency, compassion, and social justice are key attributes in nursing care for trafficked individuals.

Based on the work of Carol Taylor, Nurse Ethicist, the elements of ethical agency for ethical nursing action are:

- ☐ Moral Sensibility
- ☐ Moral Responsiveness
- ☐ Moral Reasoning and Discernment
- ☐ Moral Accountability
- ☐ Moral Character
- ☐ Moral Motivation
- ☐ Moral Valuing
- ☐ Transformative Ethical Leadership

Strategies focusing on how to dialogue with victims begins with respect and understanding the devastating harm done to victims. Coercion, fraud, threats, violence, abuse and torture are central elements in all forms of trafficking. The trafficked individual's intrinsic value, freedom and autonomy are obliterated.

Nursing action requires moral agency and responsiveness linked to nursing actions that are implemented with knowledge and understanding (Skalko & Cherry, 2016).

Upholding human dignity is a hallmark of nursing practice and requires nurses to advocate for voiceless trafficked human persons.

Today, nursing as a profession has a duty and responsibility to develop human trafficking as a nursing sub-specialty within nursing.

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