Abstract

Did you receive Institution Review Board (IRB) approval for this project?

- Yes

Educational Track

- Clinical

Purpose:

Practice Problem: Healthcare professionals have not been successful in identifying human trafficking victims. Lack of recognition is related to inadequate training and screening tools. No patients had been identified as potential human trafficking victims in our Emergency Department prior to the initiation of this project.

Design:

This was a staff development evidenced based practice project. We wanted to educate the staff on how to identify human trafficking victims in the clinical setting. Once patients were identified the staff had to be educated on how to respond appropriately to this patient population.

Setting:

The facility where the project took place is a community hospital with Level III trauma designation. It is located in a major metropolitan community near an international airport. The community that it serves is diverse with several local populations made up of people from Latin American countries, African-Americans, African French speaking immigrants, Tongans, as well as natives of the state.

Participants/Subjects:

All ED staff participated in this project. Emergency Department RNs screened high risk populations for human trafficking. High risk populations were identified as under 30 years old with psychiatric/substance abuse complaints, patients with sexual assaults, intimate partner violence and minors with sexual transmitted infections and/or pregnancy. If the nurses had a gut instinct that something was wrong and that the patient could possibly be a trafficking victim, those patients were also screened.

Methods:

An ED Human Trafficking Team was formed. Staff were surveyed to obtain their baseline knowledge of human trafficking. Education on risk factors, red flags, screening questions and how to appropriately intervene with victims of trafficking was provided to the staff. The ED team developed a screening tool and utilized 4 questions that were found in the literature to identify trafficking victims. The staff were educated on the tool and the tool was easily accessible in the triage bays and at the charge nurse desk.

Results/Outcomes:

Screening included 189 patients for trafficking. 27 patients identified as potential victims. 16 probable victims based on the number of red flags and how they answered the screening questions. Five were
confirmed trafficking victims. Two of the 5 patients accepted help. An audit showed many high-risk patients were not screened. Survey of staff to determine why all eligible patients were not screened. The survey revealed staff screened patients verbally without recording the information. Reasons were lack of education, lack of time, lack of privacy and no screening tool in the computer system. Identified ways to provide privacy. We are providing ongoing education and exploring how to make the screening process easier in collaboration with the system-wide nursing informatics director to add a screening tool in the electronic health record.

Implications:

Emergency Departments are seeing human trafficking victims. When staff are trained, they will identify and respond appropriately to these patients. All ED staff need to be educated on identifying and responding appropriately to these patients. There is not a validated screening tool for Emergency Department use. Research needs to be done to validate a screening tool.

References

1. Reference 1


2. Reference 2


3. Reference 3


4. Reference 4


5. Reference 5