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Development of an emergency room identification tool to aid in the identification of victims of sex trafficking

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Development of an emergency room identification tool to aid in the identification of victims of sex trafficking

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Despite the reality that the majority of victims of sex trafficking interact with the healthcare system, there is no uniformly implemented or agreed upon screening tool utilized by emergency departments to identify members of this population. In addition, there is no easily accessible composite of resources available to be distributed if these victims of sex trafficking are identified. This study aims to aid in the design and dissemination of such a screening tool and to create a composite of local and national resources that serve this population.

Using an interview guide, conversations were held with policy experts and healthcare professionals. Questions revolved around answering: what is the magnitude of the problem?; what is currently being done to mitigate this problem and what is the impact of those initiatives?; and identifying the role of physicians in utilizing these initiatives.

During these conversations, it was confirmed that although screening tools do exist, there are none that are widely used. However, as suggested during two interviews with healthcare

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professionals, there are many logistical parallels between identifying victims of sex trafficking and identifying victims of domestic violence. Recognizing these parallels would encourage more healthcare professionals to implement the screening tool proposed by this study.

Dissemination of this screening tool followed by a pre and post test to determine knowledge of red flags to look for and evaluate providers' comfort level navigating available resources will hopefully confirm that. Being equipped with such knowledge will result in better care for this underserved population.