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Human Trafficking: The Need for Nursing Advocacy

2 Human trafficking is a global human rights crisis that involves the exploitation of individuals through coercion, force, or fraud for sex or labor. The International Labor Organization (2022) mentions that over 50 million individuals were victims of modern slavery, sex trafficking, and forced labor globally. Such a crisis transcends national boundaries, affecting developed and developing nations including the United States. The National Human Trafficking Hotline (2025) in the United States reported over 10,000 cases in 2023 with victims ranging from children to adults of all nationalities and genders.

1 Trafficking thrives in rural and urban areas in the United States and is often hidden in plain sight (Gbiorczyk, 2021). Additionally, victims may be exploited in industries such as hospitality, domestic work, agriculture, and the commercial sex trade. Most victims are U.S citizens, an issue that challenges the misconception that trafficking is a foreign issue. Consequently, vulnerable populations such as runaway youth, individuals facing poverty, and undocumented immigrants are at higher risk.

Human trafficking is not just a legal and social issue but also a critical health concern. This is because victims often suffer from complex psychological and physical trauma, including depression, PTSD, malnutrition, and sexually transmitted diseases (Cunha et al., 2023). Nurses are often the first point of contact in healthcare setting, and are positioned to provide trauma-informed care, and advocate for survivor-centered policies. Ultimately, nursing advocacy is crucial for prevention, early intervention, and recovery support, thereby reinforcing the role of nurses as defenders against human trafficking.

References

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