

4. HEALTH ISSUES IN TIP

TOPIC: HEALTH ISSUES IN TIP

AIM: This Module is aimed at acquainting personnel with the health issues related to TIP.

LEARNING OUTCOME: At the end of this presentation, participants are expected to:

- Explain health implications of TIP
- List Basic First Aid procedures
- Discuss general medical concerns of TIPs
- Identify health challenges associated with TIPs
- Understand the implications of these health issues to the victims and society

OUTLINE:

- Introduction
- Physical and Health Issues and their Implications in TIP STIs
- Mental Health Issues in TIP
- Implications of the Health Issues to victims and society
- Effective Remedies
- Basic First Aid Procedures.
- Management of physical health issues of victims of trafficking (VoT)
- Management of mental health issues of VoTs
- Conclusion

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is the third largest profit yielding criminal activity in the world after arms dealing and drug trafficking and traffickers have continued to use many tricks to lure their victims

into being trafficked. These victims include those trafficked for labour and commercial sex within and outside the country and there are many negative consequences of this criminal act on the victims and the society at large. One of it is in the area of their physical and mental health.

There are significant health impacts for victims both while they are being transported and when they have reached their destination. Trafficked persons experience physical, sexual, and psychological violence at the hands of traffickers, pimps, sex buyers, employers, and others. Health effects are not limited only to those trafficked for sexual exploitation. Those trafficked for forced labour may live and work in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, with no consideration of safety. These are problems not just for the individual, who may suffer from long-term adverse health, but as such, conditions can harbour infectious diseases, wider populations may also be put at risk.

2.0 Physical and Health Issues and their Implications in TIP

The following are some of the health implications arising from trafficking in persons:

- Sexual Transmitted Infections.
- HIV/AIDS
- Unwanted Pregnancy
- Hepatitis
- Mental Problems
- Complications of Abortions
- Depression
- Stigmatization
- Drug Addiction

- Alcoholism
- Reproductive Tract Infections etc

2.1 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): These are infections that are passed on from one person to another through sexual contact, and sometimes by genital contact - the infection can be passed on via vaginal intercourse, oral sex, and anal sex. They are also known as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) or Venereal Diseases (VD). But STI is broader than STD.

Some sexually transmitted infections can spread through the use of unsterilized drug needles from mother to baby during childbirth or breastfeeding, and blood transfusions. Examples of STIs include: Chlamydia, Chancroid, Crabs (Pubic Lice), Genital herpes, Genital warts, Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), Trichomoniasis (parasitic infection), Molluscum Contagiosum, Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), Scabies, Syphilis, gonorrhoea, Trichomoniasis (Trich), Yeast infections.

2.2 HIV/AIDS: HIV stands for Human Immune Deficiency, the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). When a person is infected with this virus, his or her body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal secretions will contain HIV and antibodies against the virus. The virus stays in the body and slowly destroys the body's defense mechanisms. According to medical experts, the duration of time it takes for a person infected to fall ill varies and takes between several months to seven years. Therefore an infected person can continue spreading the virus unknowingly.

After the virus might have destroyed the body immune system, the symptom of AIDS begins to manifest. At this stage of full-blown AIDS, the body's natural defense system is weakened and the infected person becomes vulnerable and is at the mercy of all kind of infection such as prolonged neck, groin or armpit, persistent cough, skin infections and unexplained weight loss and it eventually lead to death.

2.3 Unwanted Pregnancy

Unwanted pregnancies can be described as pregnancies that are unplanned or unwanted at the time of conception. Unwanted pregnancy mainly results from engaging in virginal sexual activity without the use of contraception, or due to incorrect use of a contraceptive method, but may also arise from the failure of the contraception method when used correctly to prevent pregnancy.

In the case of Human Trafficking, unwanted pregnancy occurs when victims are sexually molested without the use of condom and without them making any deliberate effort to prevent conception from taking place.

2.4 Bodily Injury

Bodily injury is physical damage to the body. Some victims of trafficking or child abuse are physically manhandled thereby causing one type of injury or the other on their body.

2.5 VVF

Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) is an abnormal connection or opening between the bladder and vagina resulting in continuous involuntary leaking of urine. The wetting of victims' clothes and

the accompanying offensive smell prevents them from socializing with their family and their community, hence they are often regarded as outcasts. It is considered one of the worst morbidities associated with delivery.

Most victims of trafficking are young girls (underage) whose lives have been so traumatized for the simple reason that they are forced to have sexual intercourse before their bodies could fully develop.

3.0 Mental Health Issues in TIP

Trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (TPSD)

This is a condition of persistent mental and emotional stress occurring as a result of injury or severe psychological shock, typically involving disturbance of sleep and constant vivid recall of the experience, with dulled responses to people around them. Because victims of human trafficking are made to undergo extreme sexual, physical, and psychological abuses, they, often experience TPSD.

4.0 Implication to the society

There are great negative consequences of some of these health issues in TIP on the society. For instance, victims with HIV/AIDS who are not aware of it are bound to spread it to many other unsuspecting members of the society

5.0 Effective remedies

5.1 Psychosocial Treatments

The term Psychosocial refers to an individual's psychological development in and interaction with their social environment. Psychosocial treatments (interventions) include structured

counselling, motivational enhancement, case management, care-coordination, etc.

Basic First Aid Procedures.

Basic first aid refers to the initial process of assessing and addressing the needs of someone who has been injured or is in physiological distress due to choking, a heart attack, allergic reactions, drugs or other medical emergencies. Basic first aid allows you to quickly determine a person's physical condition and the correct course of treatment. You should always seek professional medical help as soon as you are able, but following correct first aid procedures can be the difference between life and death.

Performing the Three Cs

- 1. Check the surroundings.** Evaluate the situation. Are there things that might put you at risk of harm? Are you or the victim threatened by fire, toxic smoke or gasses, an unstable building, live electrical wires or other dangerous scenario? Do not rush into a situation where you could end up as a victim yourself. If approaching the victim will endanger your life, seek professional help immediately; they have higher levels of training and know how to handle these situations. First aid becomes useless if you can't safely perform it without hurting yourself.
- 2. Call for help.** Call authorities or emergency services immediately if you believe someone to be seriously injured. If you are the only person on the scene, try to establish breathing in the patient before calling for help. Do not leave the victim alone for an extensive amount of time.

3. Care for the person. Caring for someone who has just gone through serious trauma includes both physical treatment and emotional support. Remember to stay calm and try to be reassuring; let the person know that help is on its way and that everything will be alright.

Caring for an Unconscious Person

a. **Determine responsiveness.** If a person is unconscious, try to rouse them by gently tickling their bare hands and feet or by speaking to them. If they do not respond to activity, sound, touch, or other stimulation, determine whether they are breathing.

b. **Check for breathing and a pulse.** If unconscious and unable to be roused, check for breathing: look for a rise in the chest area; listen for the sound of air coming in and out; feel for air using the side of your face. If no signs of breathing are apparent, check for a pulse.

c. **If the person remains unresponsive, prep for CPR.** Unless you suspect a spinal injury, carefully roll them onto their back and open their airway. If you suspect a spinal injury, leave the person where they are, provided they are breathing. If the person begins to vomit, move them over to their side to help prevent choking.

- Keep the head and neck aligned.
- Carefully roll them onto their back while holding their head.
- Open the airway by lifting the chin.

d. **Perform 30 chest compressions and two rescue breaths as part of CPR.** In the center of the chest, just below an imaginary line running between the nipples, put your two hands together and compress the chest down approximately 2 inches at a rate of 100 compressions per minute. After 30 compressions, give two rescue breaths and check vitals. If the breaths are blocked, reposition the airway. Make sure the

head is tilted slightly back and the tongue is not obstructing it. Continue this cycle of 30 chest compressions and two rescue breaths until someone else relieves you.

e. **Remember your ABCs of CPR.** The ABCs of CPR refer to the three critical things you need to look for.[3] Check these three things frequently as you give the person first aid CPR.

- **Airway.** Does the person have an unobstructed airway?
- **Breathing.** Is the person breathing?
- **Circulation.** Does the person show a pulse at major pulse points (wrist, carotid artery, groin)?

f. **Make sure the person is warm as you wait for medical help.** Drape a towel or a blanket over the person if you have one; if you don't remove some of your own clothing (such as your coat or jacket) and use it as a cover until medical help arrives.

g. **Pay attention to a list of don'ts.** As you administer first aid, be sure to be aware of these things that you should not do in any case:

- Do not feed or hydrate an unconscious person. This could cause choking and possible asphyxiation.
- Do not leave the person alone. Unless you absolutely need to signal or call for help, stay with the person at all times.
- Do not prop up an unconscious person's head with a pillow.
- Do not slap or splash with water an unconscious person's face. These are movie gimmicks.

Treating Common Problems in First Aid Scenarios

Stop the bleeding first. After you have established that the victim is breathing and has a pulse, your next priority should be to control any bleeding. Control of bleeding is one of the most important things you can do to save a trauma victim. Use direct pressure on a wound before

trying any other method of managing bleeding. Read the linked article for more detailed steps you can take.

MANAGEMENT OF PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES OF Victims of Trafficking (VOTs)

Victims of trafficking often suffer from serious physical health issues ranging from lacerations, broken bones, infections, HIV, STIs, unhealthy weight loss due to food deprivation, poor nutrition and pregnancy.

VoTs require medical attention to treat urgent medical complications. Health providers should ensure that VoTs are provided with good nutrition, physical exercise and rest as this facilitates recuperation from post-traumatic stress related symptoms.

In managing victims' physical health, the health provider must ensure ethical standards and professionalism at all times. These ethical standards include the following:

- Nondiscrimination: no discrimination based on Age, sex, religion or tribe.
- Ask questions in a sensitive manner
- Ensure confidentiality
- Establish a hopeful, trusting relationship with the client.
- Provide intervention services and referrals where necessary
- Address health consequences and the aftercare process.

7.0 MANAGEMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OF VoTs

As a result of the traumatizing and complex nature of Human trafficking, mental health issues associated with trafficked persons are often complex. In addition, many mental health issues are often time not expressed until after immediate needs such as safety and shelter

have been met. These include anxiety, exhaustion, intimidation, threats, Addiction to drugs or Alcohol.

Victims with mental health challenges often develop Negative coping mechanisms that makes them non receptive to rehabilitation services.

It is important that the health worker:

- Provide care, based on individuals specific needs
- Avoid judgmental statements or actions and be supportive of healing and recovery through a patient – centered treatment plan.
- Integrated care which entails giving attention to the mind, body and spirit.
- Establish a hopeful, trusting relationship with the Trafficked person
- Research if necessary to better understand the Risk factors, health consequences and best practices of after care.
- Develop a plan for after care of the victim.

7.1 Treatment Plan

- I. Maternal Health Care Procedures
- II. Emotional Psychological Health Care Counselling
- III. Voluntary Counseling and Testing for all victims.

8.0 Guidelines for Medical Referral for VOTs.

- Link shelters with government endorsed health facilities, providing, VCT, etc and TB management, mental health service and other referral services as appropriate.
- Provide mental health services to all TPs through prompt and functional referral system.

- Create enabling environment for the involvement of alternative medical practitioners including spiritual and traditional healers in the management of IPS where necessary.
- Train shelter staffs in the administration of first aid/ post exposure prophylaxis(PEP) and refer when necessary.
- Facilitate Tps access to resident health personnel within the shelter or to external health services.

6.0 Conclusion

In this Module, the effects of Trafficking in Persons on victims' health as well as that of the society have been discussed.

Victims of human trafficking are exposed to various health risks and abuse. Trafficked persons also face neglect and poor living conditions which often result in anaemia, malnutrition. This module explains the need to ensure the delivery of health services that meet specific needs of Trafficked persons including alternate medical care where necessary and to also provide standardized counselling services, which addresses specific health needs of Trafficked persons. It is hoped that a concerted effort will bring this heinous crime to a stop and so that the health of the populace will not be at a high risk.

ACTIVITY

Mention some of the health risks associated with TIP and explain how.

1. You are on duty and a victim becomes unconscious; role play how you would care for that victim.
2. Why are medical referrals important for victims of trafficking?