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The Mental Health Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking

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No disclosures.



Overview:

- Human Trafficking & Victim Challenges
- Impact on Mental Health
- Disorders & Treatment
- How to help?
- Resources



Barriers & Challenges that Prevent Victims from Seeking Help:

- Self-blame
- Isolation
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Limited access to healthcare
- Difficulty establishing trust with others
- A fear of being criminalized
- Cultural barriers
- Lack of knowledge of their rights as victims

Mental Health Consequences:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Depressive Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Substance use Disorders
- Suicide
- Other Mental Health Disorders: Bipolar Disorder, ADHD, Schizophrenia, Eating Disorders, Gender Dysphoria, etc.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study



- **World Health Organization (2013):** Treatment should be provided in line with clinical guidelines for working with victims of trauma.
- **Oram, et al. (2015):** From 133 trafficked adults and children, up to 28% diagnosed with PTSD, up to 34% diagnosed with mood disorders. Adults with history of HT were more likely to be admitted to Psychiatry involuntary and for a longer period of time.

- **Ottisova, et al. (2017):** Human trafficking is associated with high degree of violence, and increased risk of physical and mental health problems. Most commonly reported mental health problems include depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Hopper EK, Gonzales LD (2018):** Sex trafficking survivors had a higher rate of childhood abuse, violence during trafficking, more severe PTSD symptoms and higher comorbid depression and PTSD than survivors of labor trafficking. Transgender survivors reported more severe PTSD symptoms than male or female patients.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- **To diagnose, 1 month of:** Exposure, Intrusion, Avoidance, Negative cognition and mood, Hyperarousal
- **Screening:** PTSD Checklist (PCL)
- **Treatment:** Psychotherapy (cognitive processing therapy (Salami T, et al 2018), prolonged exposure, EMDR) medications (SSRI, prazosin for nightmares)
- **Okech, et al. (2018):** Community reintegration indirectly influenced PTSD through its effect on perceived social support.

Major Depressive Disorder

To diagnose, 2 weeks of (5 symptoms): SIGECAPS

Screening: PHQ-9, BDI, HAM-D

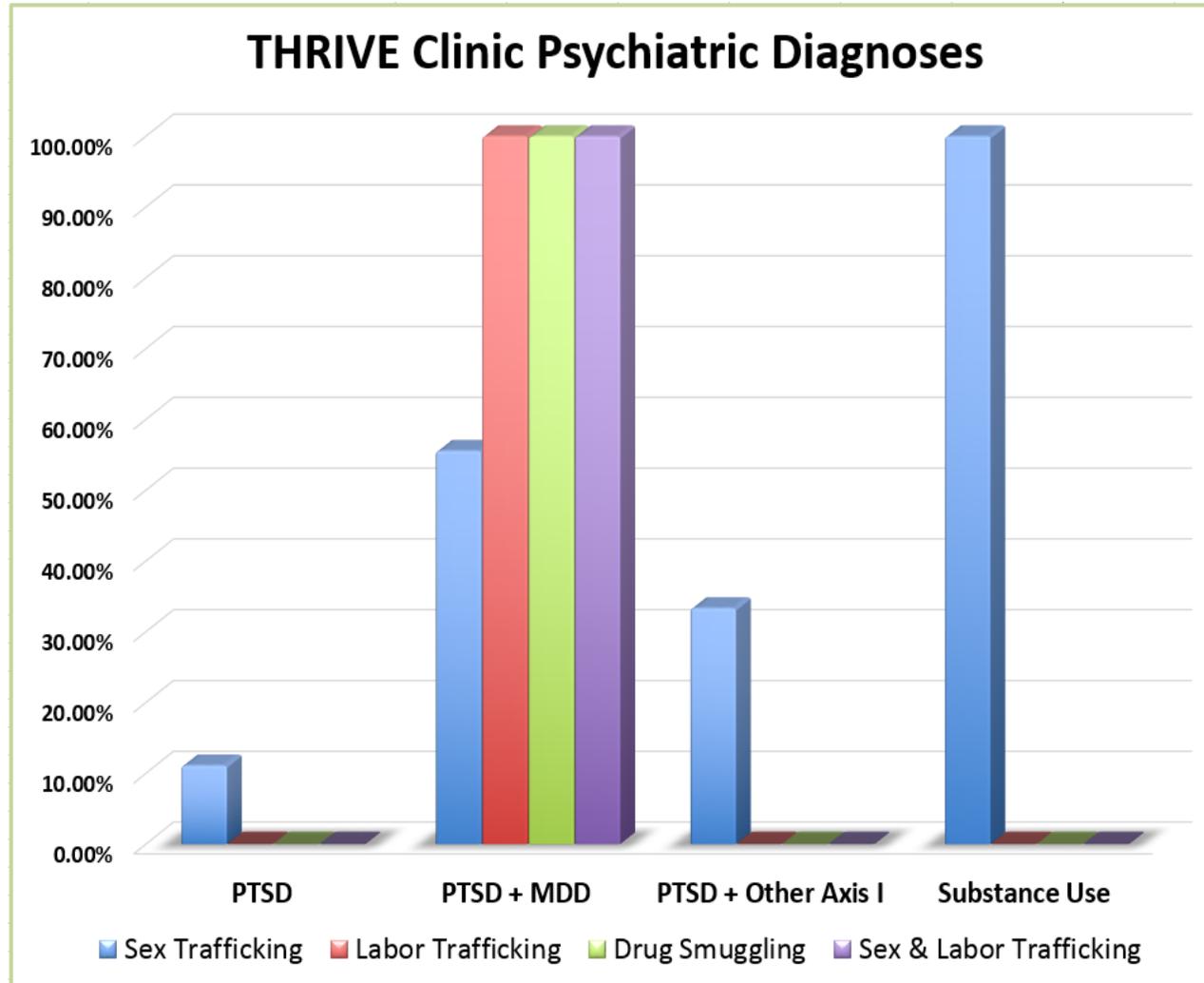
Treatment: Psychotherapy, Meds (SSRI, SSRI, bupropion, mirtazapine, MAOI/TCA)

Substance Use Disorders

- **Le (2015):** Survivors may be coerced to use drugs or alcohol whilst trafficked; others may use substances to cope during or after escaping the trafficking situation.
- Often co-morbid with other mental health issues
- Consider hospitalization if symptoms of intoxication or withdrawal
- Referral to rehab services & 12-step facilitation meetings.

Suicide and Self-Harm

- **Borschmann, et al. (2017):** Among HT patients-
33% engaged in self-harm prior to care
25% engaged in self-harm during care
After engaging in self-harm, HT pts. more likely than non-HT
pts. to be admitted as a psychiatric inpatient, but less likely to visit ER.
- **Kiss, et al (2015):** Child & adolescent survivors of HT with PTSD were 4X more likely to self-harm one month prior to screening than those w/o PTSD.



How Can We Provide Mental Health Care for Victims of Labor & Sex Trafficking?

- Recognize & screen for mental health disorders
- Refer to appropriate health care providers
- Schedule a follow up appointment (frequent & sustainable care)
- Offer multi-disciplinary, culturally competent, trauma-informed care
- Medication Management & Psychotherapy: individual, group, family, peer support
- Engage social services & case management

Concluding Remarks

- Survivors of human trafficking often suffer from mental health consequences.
- MH providers have opportunities to intervene & provide care for survivors.
- Psychiatric assessments help address the patients' mental health needs.
- Longitudinal research studies are needed to identify the best evidence-based treatment for survivors of human trafficking.

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Thank You!

National Human Trafficking Hotline
(NHTH)

Call [1-888-373-7888](tel:1-888-373-7888)

OR

Text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733)