



F5 Trafficking in Human Beings: The Role of the Dental Team in Identification

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an understanding of the issues arising from the phenomena of Trafficking in Human Beings (THB), its correlations with dental care scenarios, and how dentists can contribute to the identification and protection of trafficked victims.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting the importance of the interdisciplinary work between forensic professionals, law enforcement officers, social care providers, and healthcare providers regarding the identification of trafficked victims and the criminal organization behind such trafficking.

Trafficking in human beings is considered a modern form of slavery. Most oral health professionals are not aware of this phenomenon. It is the third-largest form of organized crime after drug dealing and arms sales. The first report of the European Union (EU) Commission on the victims of THB in Europe reveals that there have been 23,632 global victims in the EU from 2008 through 2010.

Italy is a destination or transit country for men, women, and children who are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. The goal of governmental and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGAs), which are either directly or indirectly involved in combating trafficking in human beings, is the identification and referral of victims of trafficking and also to encourage self referrals. Identification is the most important step towards providing protection and assistance to victims of trafficking. Victims of human trafficking often have multiple physical and mental health needs which may include psychological trauma, injuries from violence, head and neck trauma, sexually transmitted infections and other gynecological problems, dental/oral problems, and a poor nutritional condition. Healthcare and dental settings may offer opportunities for the identification of trafficked victims and oral health professionals, along with other health care providers, could play a part in recognizing, protecting, and reporting possible victims of trafficking.

Experiences in the field of community dentistry are presented here through the dental services offered to non-EU patients in Bari, Italy. Dental professionals and forensic experts can, in fact, contribute to the identification, assistance, and protection of trafficked persons, as well as offering forensic services to assist police investigations in order to identify crimes and locate the criminal organizations behind them. A check list of behavioral signs and general health indicators are proposed to oral health professional to raise awareness and contribute to the interdisciplinary approach of recognition and identification of trafficked victims.

As for domestic violence and child abuse cases, there are ethical concerns involved in the identification and protection of the trafficked persons, and a need for interdisciplinary work between law enforcement officers, social care providers, and health and forensic professionals. It is recommended that adequate training be given in forensic sciences and behavioral science, augmented by intercultural sensitivities, thus helping the dental team in the identification of these patients in order to fulfill both medical and ethical obligations.

Human Trafficking, Community Dentistry, Human Rights