

***Ottawa Coalition to End Human  
Trafficking (OCEHT)***

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28 March 2016

Dear Canadian Federation of Medical Students:

Re: Educating Canadian Medical Students  
on Human Trafficking in Canada

*We are* writing this letter in support of the initiative to incorporate human trafficking education into Canadian medical school curricula. Human trafficking is a national problem, affecting the most marginalized and vulnerable populations of Canada. Trafficked persons, who are known to suffer a myriad of health problems because of their exploitative situations, should be able to turn to health professionals for assistance, but currently cannot reliably do so. Providers are poorly trained to identify and care for trafficked persons; this failure is partially due to the dearth of existing data on the characteristics of this diverse population, their health needs, how they present and what the best methods of intervention are.

*We are* aware of the six core competencies outlined by the CFMS Global Health Program, and *we* believe that human trafficking specifically relates to four of them: health implications of travel, migration and displacement; social and economic determinants of health; globalization of health and healthcare; and, human rights in healthcare.

Health care professionals are one of the few groups of professionals human trafficking victims encounter. It is estimated that approximately 50% of survivors seek health care at least once during captivity. A recent study reported that, of a sample of 98% survivors, 88% had contact with a health care provider during captivity.

In the last decade, governments, researchers, policy organizations, and health care systems have begun to make efforts to address the complexities surrounding the recognition of, intervention for, and referral for this marginalized, victimized population. It is not until 2008 that the American Nurses Association (ANA) adopted a position statement on human trafficking (HT) and in May 2014 that the American Medical Women's Association adopted a position statement on sex trafficking. We have yet to adopt such statements here in Canada to show and guide our commitment to ending what is being recognized as, modern day slavery.

As *an organization*, we submit that foundational education for future healthcare providers should include a patient-centered and trauma-informed model of care. This foundation will serve to include victims of human trafficking. However, fundamentals of human trafficking also need to be included so that victims of human trafficking are not dismissed or misunderstood. Medical professionals need to understand victimology, what human trafficking is and isn't, and the neuro-biology of trauma. Only with this can the future health care professionals begin to appreciate the damaging nature of human trafficking and what their potential role of prevention could be with early recognition and intervention.

We hope that you, the CFMS, will consider this initiative, as human trafficking in Canada is a health issue that requires the involvement of healthcare providers to help effectively identify and support victims. We recognize that well-trained healthcare providers are key to an effective response to human trafficking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Zaneta Miranbigi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Zaneta Miranbigi  
Chair

*Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking (OCEHT)*

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