Mass General Freedom Clinic for Trafficking Survivors

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Human Trafficking Globally

- 20.9 million persons worldwide
  ($\pm 1.4$ million, 68% CI)
  (ILO, 2012)

- $150$ billion USD per year

- Reliable data is difficult due to the illegal, often invisible nature of trafficking.
Human Trafficking in the U.S.

- Trafficking does not always involve movement
- 33% of the traffickers are immediate family members
- HT Reporting System data between 2008-2010:
  - 83% of confirmed sex trafficking victims were US citizens
  - 95% of confirmed labor trafficking victims were undocumented (67%) or qualified aliens (28%)
  - 87% of sex trafficking victims under the age of 25 (55% <18 years old)
  - Majority women; men and transgender also affected

(Banks and Kyckelhahn, US Dept of Justice, 2011; Covenant House study, 2013)
Circumstances that **lead to a higher vulnerability:**

- Family dysfunction
- Financial insecurity
- Child abuse / neglect
- Runaway / “throwaway” youth
- Homelessness
- Substance use
- Migrants / immigrants
- Gender / sexual diverse persons
- Foster / group home placements
Role of the Health Sector

Up to 87.8% of trafficking survivors report encounters with health care professionals

(FVPF, 2005; Baldwin et al, 2011; Lederer & Wetzel, 2014)
## Health Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Health</th>
<th>Reproductive Health</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentional traumatic injuries (e.g., fractures, cuts, disfigurement) and chemical/thermal burns</td>
<td>Vaginal, perineal, and rectal injuries (e.g., secondary rape/gang rape, foreign object use)</td>
<td>Stockholm syndrome (i.e., traumatic bonding with perpetrator)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accidental traumatic and overuse injuries (e.g., joint sprains, disc herniations, muscle tears, eye strain)</td>
<td>Sexually-transmitted infections (e.g., HIV, HPV, GC, Chlamydia, Hepatitis B/C)</td>
<td>Affective disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression, panic attacks)</td>
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<td>Chemical (e.g., pesticides, industrial glues) and environmental exposures (e.g., heat exhaustion, vision/hearing impairment)</td>
<td>Diseases due to untreated STIs (e.g., AIDS, cervical cancer, PID, infertility, liver disease, hepatocellular cancer)</td>
<td>Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; symptoms include flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, memory difficulties, hypervigilance) and complex PTSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicable diseases (e.g., Hepatitis A, intestinal parasites, typhoid, TB)</td>
<td>Poor access to barrier protection or other contraception</td>
<td>Dissociative disorders, involving varying degrees of detachment from self/reality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Untreated chronic diseases (e.g., anemia, cancer, CKD, CVD, DM, HTN)</td>
<td>Forced sterilization or use of contraceptive devices</td>
<td>Sleep disorders (e.g., sleep disturbances, nightmares, insomnia)</td>
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<td>Poor oral health and injuries (e.g., tooth decay/fractures, mandibular dislocations)</td>
<td>Unplanned and high-risk pregnancies</td>
<td>Psychosomatic syndromes (e.g., chronic pain, fatigue, GI distress, headaches, dizziness)</td>
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<td>Dehydration, malnutrition, and eating disorders</td>
<td>Unsafe, forced abortions</td>
<td>Low self-esteem, shame, guilt, self-blame, self-loathing, hopelessness, anti-social, learned helplessness, loss of identity/agency</td>
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<td>Branding/tattooing and skin disorders (e.g., lice, scabies, mycoses)</td>
<td>Abortion-related complications</td>
<td>Forced or coerced substance use disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use disorder complications</td>
<td>Forced pregnancy and childbirth</td>
<td>High-risk and self-injurious behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide and accidental death (e.g., fatal trauma)</td>
<td>Lack of prenatal care, including vertical HIV transmission prevention</td>
<td>Suicide and accidental death (e.g., drug overdose)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Macias-Konstantopoulos, 2016, Ann Int Med)
Stigma & Complex Trauma

Sex trafficked
promiscuous
needs to be set straight
out of control
truant
deviant
prostitute
misbehaved
misguided
bad influence
troubled
Trauma-Informed Care

- Reduce re-traumatization
- Promote healing and recovery
- Highlight strengths and resiliency (empower)
- Support the development of healthy coping mechanisms
- Understand behavior:
  - ask “What happened to you?” instead of “What’s wrong with you?”
- Manage our own reactions!

(Elliott 2005; Wagner 2009; Warshaw et.al. 2009; Warshaw 2014; Mendelsohn 2014; NCDVTMH-ACDVTI 2014)
Mass General Freedom Clinic

Dorothea Lange Photograph, “Migrant Mother”, 1936. No use restrictions (the Farm Security Admin/Office of War Information Prints & Photographs Division).
Freedom Clinic Founding

Partnership for Freedom
Humanity United

162 ideas from over 260 organizations across 39 states to improve services for human trafficking victims and end modern day slavery
Freedom Clinic Overview

- Unmarked referral-only clinic providing free primary, preventative health care clinic for survivors of human trafficking ages 13 years and older (est. April 2015)

- Strengths-based, trauma-informed approach to patient care that empowers individuals and encourages self-care behaviors

- Providing holistic care with a focus on healing/recovery from trauma
Freedom Clinic Services

- Services are delivered in integrated fashion from a strengths perspective in a safe, trauma-informed, LGBTQ-friendly, and judgment-free environment.

- Primary and preventative care
- Annual physical exams
- Vaccinations
- Medical clearance evaluations
- Mental health
- Dental care
- Substance use treatment
- ID testing and treatment (STIs/HIV)
- Referrals to network of trauma-informed MGH subspecialists
- Case management: community resource connections
I am a strong person, but every now and then I need someone to hold my hand and tell me everything will be alright.
Freedom Clinic Approach

When interacting with patients, we do so with:

- Compassion
- Patience
- Respect
- Sensitivity to beliefs (cultural, religious, other)
- Attention to healthy therapeutic relationships – encourage healthy coping mechanisms and avoid destabilization & retraumatization
When hearing about stories of abuse, we strive to:

- Listen empathically
- Be present in the moment
- Be mindful of body language (power dynamics)
- Accept our limited role
- Avoid passing judgment
- Empower with choice
- Highlight strengths and resilience
Freedom Clinic Process

- Length of appointments
- No patient is ever fired
- Consistent providers
- Full-time access to providers
- Shared decision-making (needs, goals, wishes, priorities)
- Team-based, paralleled physical, mental health, addiction, and case management services
- Staff training in grounding techniques for emotional de-escalation of a flight-or-fight response
Freedom Clinic Referrals

Individuals and organizations that work with or help exploited and at-risk individuals

- Federal agencies (FBI, Homeland security)
- State and local government agencies (AGO, MA State Police)
- Safe houses
- Youth and adult service providers
- Other “on-the-ground” organizations
- Medical providers
Thank you – Questions?

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