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AMERICAN MEDICAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS TO TACKLE SEX TRAFFICKING

The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) recommends in its new position paper a range of strategic actions to stem the tide of U.S. sex trafficking involving women and girls.

"Additional training is needed for healthcare professionals to effectively identify and treat survivors of sex trafficking," says Dr. Suzanne Harrison, the leader of AMWA's anti-trafficking committee. "The doctor-patient visit may be the only opportunity to provide compassionate medical care and initiate services." The paper identifies several crucial points where healthcare professionals can effectively intervene.

"Sex trafficking is largely an underground problem in which traffickers prey on vulnerable individuals, often girls from poverty-stricken areas who have suffered abuse at home and are runaways," says Dr. Holly Atkinson, another key committee member. She warns physicians and other healthcare providers that "trafficked women may be reluctant to report due to fear of harm from their traffickers or from a deep sense of shame, but as healthcare professionals, we have a duty to identify and care for these patients."

AMWA considers human trafficking an egregious violation of human rights. It has become pervasive globally, with more than 20 million people around the world living in slavery. Women and girls make up roughly 80% of individuals trafficked specifically for commercial sex exploitation, although men and boys are also victims of sex trafficking.

"Increased awareness, education and outreach at all levels of community interaction are essential to conquer the problem of human trafficking," says AMWA President Dr. Farzanna Haffizulla. "AMWA will continue to advocate for a comprehensive approach, and we will partner with like-minded organizations to tackle this horrific form of modern-day slavery."

AMWA chose anti-trafficking as an initiative under the leadership of former President Dr. Gayatri Devi. The anti-trafficking committee, called Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans (PATH), is co-chaired by Harrison, associate professor at the Florida State University College of Medicine, Atkinson, assistant professor at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and Dr. Kanani Titchen, pediatric resident at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals and A.I. duPont Hospital for Children.

ABOUT AMWA

The American Medical Women's Association, headquartered in Reston, Va., is a nonprofit organization that functions at the local, nation and international levels to advance women in medicine and improve women's health by providing and developing leadership, advocacy, education, expertise, mentoring and strategic alliances. Founded in 1915, AMWA is the oldest national organization of women physicians. Membership in AMWA includes physicians, residents, students and allied health professionals. For more information, visit <http://www.amwa-doc.org/>