



WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 30 JULY

Nurses play key role in identifying victims of human trafficking

Geneva, Switzerland, 30 July 2020 – Today, we mark World Day Against Trafficking in Persons by drawing attention to the key role of nurses in identifying and preventing human trafficking. With the theme, *Committed to the Cause – Working on the Frontline to End Human Trafficking*, this year focuses on the first responders to human trafficking.

On its website, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) says, “During the COVID-19 crisis, the essential role of first responders has become even more important. Particularly as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have made their work even more difficult. Still, their contribution is often overlooked and unrecognized.”

“Nurses are uniquely positioned to identify victims of trafficking” said Annette Kennedy, ICN President. “Over 80% of survivors seek medical care within their first year of being trafficked. It is therefore vital that every nurse is aware of the warning signs and what to do.”

Launched at the ICN Congress in Singapore in 2019, the pamphlet [Human Trafficking, the Basics of what nurses need to know](#), produced by ICN, the HR Directorate of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland, describes the types of human trafficking, general signs to look out for, and which actions to take if human trafficking is suspected.

Cindy McCain, American businesswoman, philanthropist, educator, humanitarian and wife of the late U.S. Senator John McCain, addressed an audience of over 5,000 nurses at ICN 2019 saying, “You are on the frontlines. You are leaders and opinionators. Unless you are educated on signs of human trafficking, we won’t win this. This is a call to action!”



Joining Ms McCain at the Congress was Kevin Hyland, OBE, member of the Council of Europe Independent Group of Experts for Trafficking and former Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner for the UK. He highlighted the prevalence and nature of human trafficking and how the

nursing profession can develop strategies to identify victims and increase prevention. Click [here](#) to see the presentations by Mrs McCain and Mr Hyland.

The UNODC has released a report on the [Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons](#) which states “There are fears that COVID-19 is making the task of identifying victims of human trafficking even more difficult. They are also more exposed to contracting the virus, less equipped to prevent it, and have less access to healthcare to ensure their recovery. “

Nurses are well positioned to identify signs in suspected human trafficking victims, both physical, such as physical abuse and malnourishment, and mental, such as submissiveness, confusion, fear and lack of self-esteem. During the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns, confinement and restrictions to movement increase isolation and nurses may be the only contact victims have to the outside. It is critical that nurses have access to human trafficking assessment tools so they can protect them and report the perpetrators to the authorities.

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