

March 22, 2016

Attention: Canadian Federation of Medical Students

Subject: Educating Canadian Medical Students on Human Trafficking



On behalf of the Harriet Tubman Institute and the Alliance Against Modern Slavery, I hope this letter finds you doing well. As a former British colony, Canada abolished the slave trade over 200 years ago. However, in Canada and globally slavery was certainly not eradicated with the legal abolition of the slave trade. There are a staggering 30 million slaves in the world today, and an estimated 6,000 slaves in Canada who are human trafficked and exploited for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced marriage. Human trafficking in the 21st Century is a \$32 billion global industry on par with drug trafficking and illicit arms sales.

At the moment, doctors and health care professionals are not receiving training on the signs, symptoms and treatments available for trafficked persons or those at risk of being trafficked. This is a tragic missed opportunity, for research demonstrated these individuals regularly frequent hospitals and clinics.

We are writing this letter in support of the initiative to incorporate human trafficking education into Canadian medical school curricula. We are aware of the six core competencies outlined by the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) through their Global Health Program. Furthermore, our partners and our team believe that human trafficking specifically relates to four of these core competencies: health implications of travel, migration and displacement; social and economic determinants of health; globalization of health and healthcare; and, human rights in healthcare.

As an organization and as researchers at the university, community and government policy levels, we consider educating future healthcare providers on human trafficking to be vital to the health and wellbeing of our country. The average age of a trafficking victim for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation is thirteen years old, so it is critical that medical students are provided with up-to-date information about human trafficking, available screening protocols, and victim support services that will allow them to interact confidently with patients who are potential trafficking victims. Ultimately, this will allow healthcare professionals to develop the skills necessary to identify victims of human trafficking and provide victims with potentially life-saving resources.

We strongly encourage you to support this important initiative. Human trafficking in Canada is a health issue that impacts our most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,

Karlee Sapoznik

President / CEO / Co-Founder of the Alliance Against Modern Slavery

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