

A screening tool for identification of victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children

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Background: Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and sex trafficking have only recently been recognized as problems by healthcare providers. Both UNICEF (2014) and the Institute of Medicine (2013) have stressed the need for systematic research to assist healthcare providers in the identification of victims. The aim of this poster is to describe initial findings relating to the development of a screening tool to identify CSEC victims.

Methods: Twenty-seven sites nationwide (e.g., emergency departments and specialized clinics) participated in a study to validate a screening tool for identifying CSEC victims in an outpatient setting. The study was conducted under approval from the Institutional Review Board at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Inclusion criteria for the study generally involved being an English-speaking adolescent aged 11-18 years.

Results: Study enrollment is ongoing. Preliminary data for 210 youth were analyzed for this abstract. The sample was diverse with respect to age ($M=14.59$ years, $SD=1.490$ years) and ethnicity (56.4% Caucasian, 31.8% African American, 3.9% mixed race, and 7.8% Hispanic); the sample was predominantly female (92.8%). Of the 210 youth in the sample, 115(54.8%) have had sex. Of these 115 youth, 13(11.3%) have traded sex for money, drugs, or housing; 7(58.3%) of 12(10.4%) complied when asked by someone to have sex with another person; 8(61.5%) of 13(11.3%) performed sexual acts in public when propositioned; and 19(45.2%) of 42(36.5%) shared provocative photos when prompted. Medical providers flagged 14 youth (6.7% of total 210) as potential CSEC victims.

Conclusions: The screening tool shows promise for effective identification of CSEC victims. This poster will present additional data and further quantitative analyses exploring the influences of sexual behavior, drug and alcohol use, and other factors on the risk of becoming a CSEC victim. Implications for researchers and clinicians will also be discussed.

Key words: commercial sexual exploitation of children; screening tool

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