

Identification of Abuse and Human Trafficking: An Interdisciplinary Approach

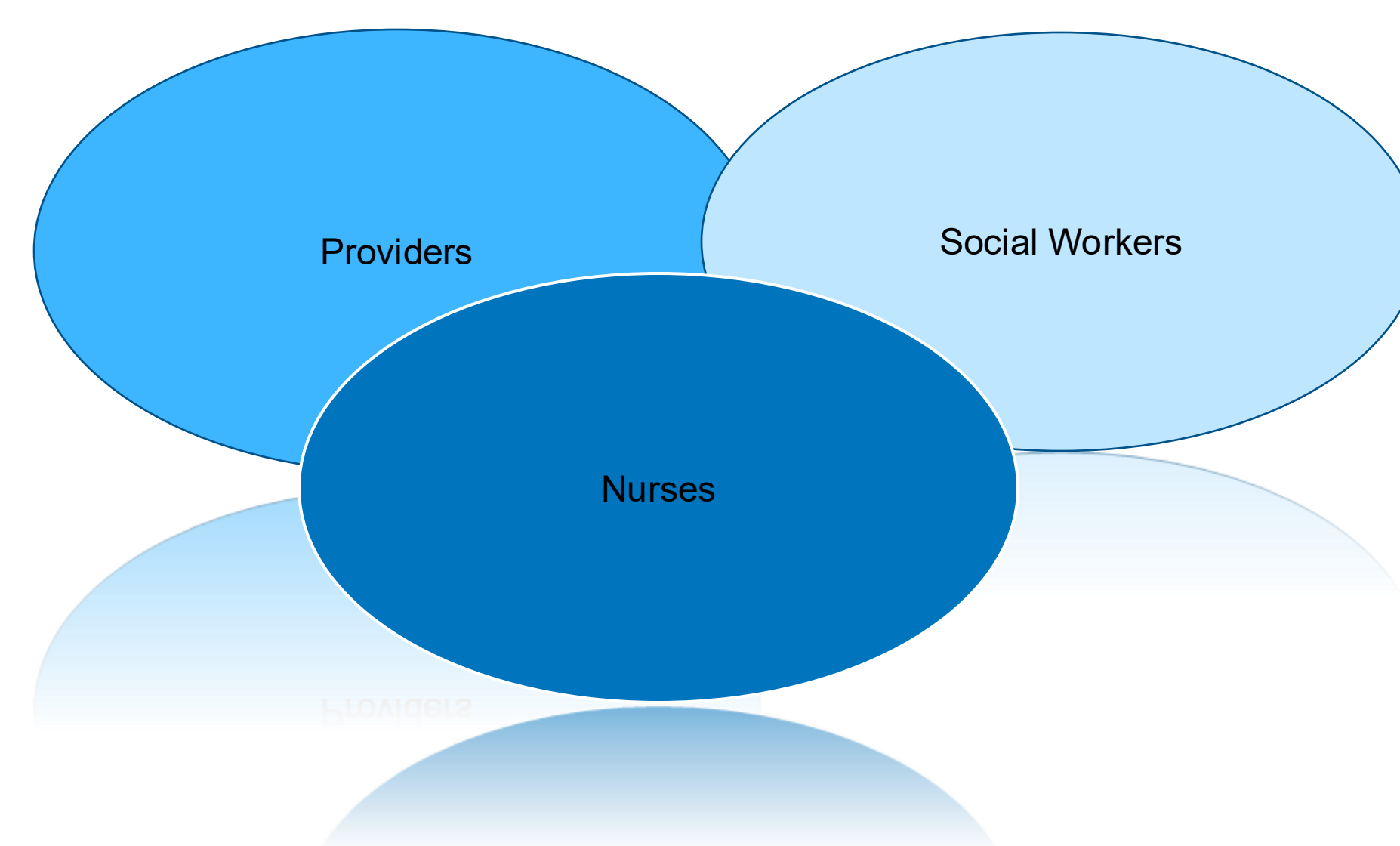
Gem P. Inay, MSN, RN, CEN, ONC, Terry Bertolotti, MSN, RN, CEN, Rosemarie Hill, MSN, RN, CEN, Tamsen Gallagher, MSW, LCSW, Erik Chu, MD

BACKGROUND

- Emergency Departments (ED) are perceived as a secure environment for individuals who are victims of human trafficking (HT) and abuse, due to their association with potential help. HT can affect anyone; therefore, ED staff must recognize the red flags of patients vulnerable to violence and abuse. The implementation of evidence-based screening tools and a multidisciplinary approach should be prioritized to reduce HT-related morbidity and mortality.
- There is a knowledge gap that exists surrounding HT and nurses, potentially leading to missed opportunities in identifying and rescuing possible victims.
- Healthcare providers, particularly in the ED are uniquely positioned to identify, rescue and provide treatment and take action for trafficking victims.

OBJECTIVES

- This study aims to review the development and implementation of an effective screening tool utilizing evidence-based practice in the identification of abuse and HT in the ED.



METHODS

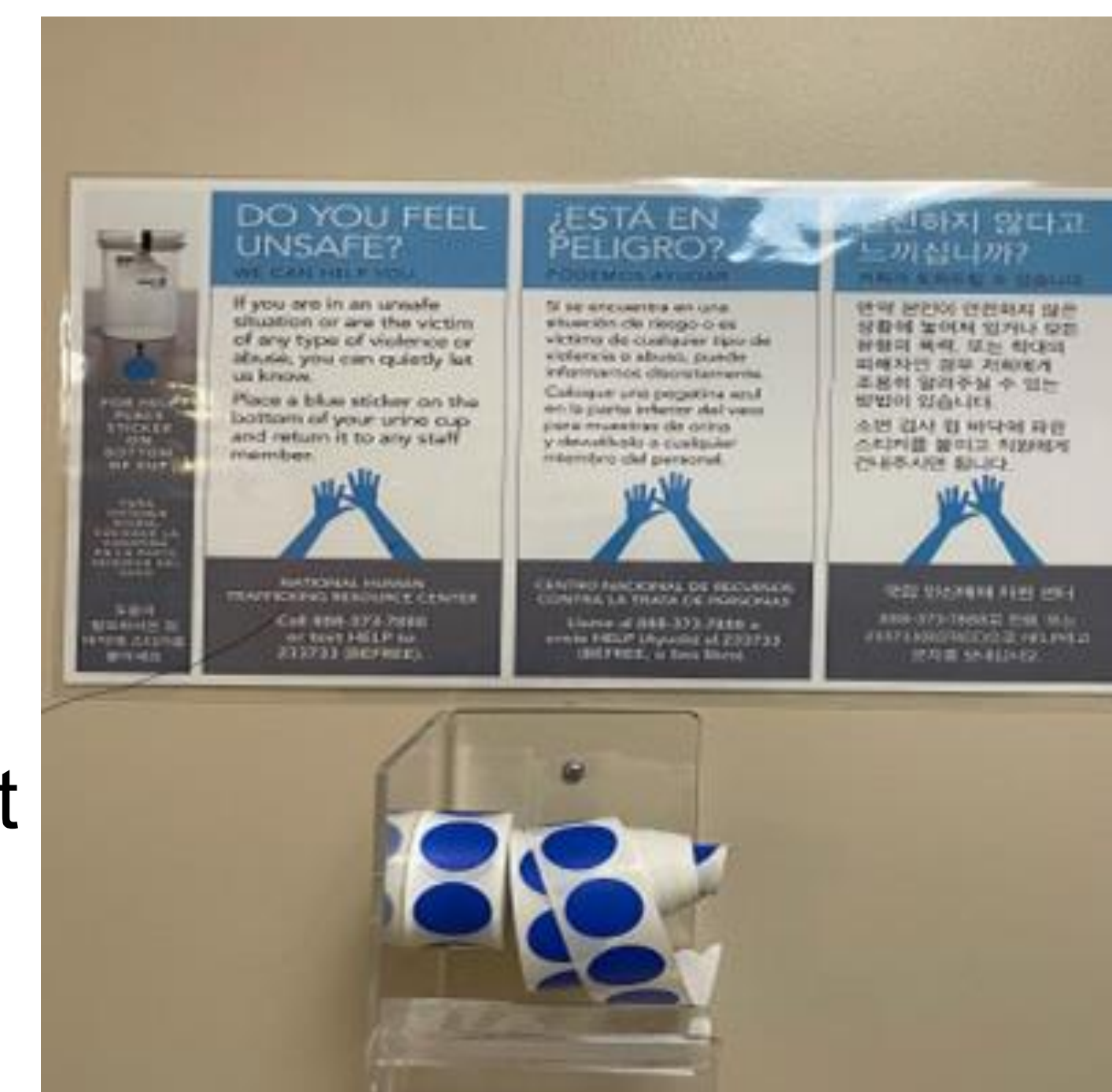
The inclusion criteria includes all patients exhibiting strong indications of abuse or HT who presented to the ED between August 2020, and February 2025. Patients who were unstable and have life-threatening situations were considered exclusion criteria.

Approach 1:

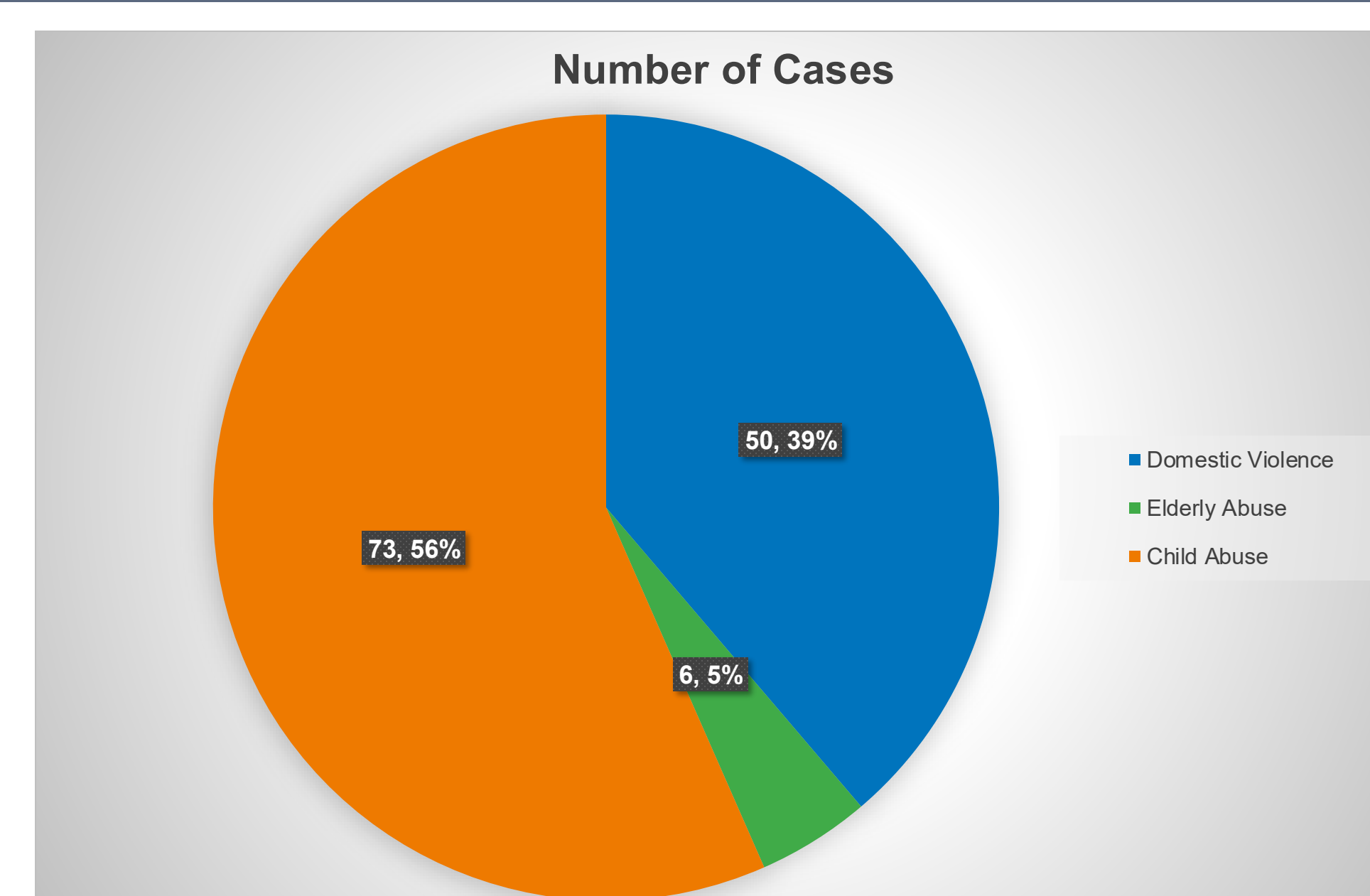
- Human Trafficking (HT) questionnaires were added in EMR.
- Eleven questions in EMR triage flowsheet when there's a suspicion of abuse or HT.

Approach 2:

- Blue dot sticker is placed on the bottom of the urine cup if they are victims of abuse or human trafficking.
- Posters in three different languages and the blue dot stickers in the main ED restrooms.



RESULTS



CONCLUSION

- The domestic violence and abuse patient cases were not identified utilizing any of the tools, but the staff education positively impacted the ability to identify potential victims. This data indicates that there are patients who are victims of abuse and violence presenting to the ED. This population of vulnerable people, may also be at an increase for human traffic related abuse.
- It is crucial to have interdisciplinary teamwork in order to identify existing healthcare challenges and create solutions that will enhance patient and community safety.
- Be curious on the trend in healthcare. Nurses are well positioned to identify potential victims of abuse or HT as frontline workers.
- Increasing the knowledge and understanding of ED staff regarding the important signs and indicators of abuse, domestic violence and HT as well as collaborating with the interdisciplinary team in implementing efficient screening protocols for identifying cases of abuse and human trafficking can significantly contribute to saving lives.

REFERENCES

