



# See Something, Say Something: GPS Tracker Foreign Body Ingestion as a Unique Presentation of Human Trafficking

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## Introduction

- An estimated 20 million people are victims of human trafficking around the world annually.
- In the United States, human trafficking is a federal crime under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000.
- US studies have shown that up to 88% of human trafficking victims seek medical care. However, human trafficking is under recognized in medicine due to the associated legal and social stigma, with women, children, and financially challenged populations being more likely targets. Moreover, victims may not disclose any history of abuse due to fear of retribution.
- Certain traffickers use Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking devices to monitor and track their victims from miles away. They can also utilize the human gastrointestinal cavity for illegal purposes, including narco-trafficking leading to foreign body ingestion.
- We present a unique case of a 28-year-old female who was a sex trafficking victim and presented to the hospital after she was forced to swallow two GPS trackers by her trafficker.

## Case Presentation

- A 28-year-old female with history of seizures, presented to the emergency department with 1 day history of hematemesis.
- She reported that she was a human trafficking victim, forced to swallow two GPS trackers 8 days prior.
- Blood pressure was 106/72 mmHg, pulse 72 beats/min, temperature 97.8°F.
- Physical examination was negative for abdominal tenderness or distention.
- Hemoglobin was 10.1 g/dL.
- CT scan of abdomen and pelvis showed two metallic disc shaped objects in the gastric antrum measuring 2.1 x 0.6 cm each.
- The Gastroenterology team was consulted and performed an urgent Esophagogastroduodenoscopy. At EGD, two GPS tracking devices were found in the antrum and were removed with Roth net without complication.

## Case Presentation (Continued)

- The social work team was involved, and the retrieved objects were transferred to Homeland Security.
- Prior to further investigation, the patient left against medical advice without subsequent return.



Figure 1: Two GPS trackers in the gastric antrum.



Figure 2: Removal of GPS trackers with Roth net.

## Case Presentation (Continued)



Figure 3: Successful retrieval of two GPS trackers.

## Discussion

- To our knowledge, this is the first reported case of endoscopic removal of GPS trackers from a patient's stomach in the United States.
- This case highlights the use of GPS devices for malicious purposes. Perpetrators who are involved in human trafficking can track their victims using GPS devices.
- As healthcare physicians, we need to be able to recognize such devices and have a high level of suspicion specially when encountering patients who are victims of human trafficking.
- We hope to increase awareness among gastroenterologists and other healthcare providers regarding such illegal practices. Appropriate recognition of these GPS tracking devices can potentially be life-altering or lifesaving for these victims.

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