AETC-NMC
AIDS Education and Training Center
National Multicultural Center
HOWARD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Case Study Adapted from Addressing HIV Care and Latino Model

Maria, a 42-year-old Latina, reported for the results of her HIV test a month after being tested. Maria is not fluent in English so she brought her two teenage sons, Miguel and Javier, to help translate for her. The clinic does not have bilingual staff or hired interpreters, so when Miguel explains that he and his brother will translate for their mother, who is not proficient in English, the clinic staff does not oppose this arrangement.

While the counselor feels uncomfortable about sharing the results of Maria's HIV test with her two sons, the counselor proceeds to do so because she knows of no other way to communicate the results to Maria. As the counselor begins to inform the sons that their mother has tested positive for HIV, Javier becomes very upset and starts crying. Miguel translates the results to his mother and begins accusing her of sexual promiscuity.

Discussion Questions

1. What breach occurred during this session?

2. What could have been done differently to prevent this situation from occurring?

3. If placed in a similar situation and lacking a certified interpreter, what are some options for overcoming language barriers in a culturally sensitive manner?

4. Is it ever appropriate to ask or allow a patient's family members to serve as interpreters, and if so, should the age and gender of family members be taken into consideration.

5. Discuss other Cultural Competence issues that may impact retention into care and treatment.