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

Case Study Adapted from Addressing HIV Care and Health Literacy

Sarah is a 17-year-old African American female who was diagnosed with HIV six months ago and is currently two months pregnant. At this visit, Dr. Patel, who is of East Indian descent, wishes to discuss Sarah's decision to give birth and when to start antiretroviral therapy (ART). Dr. Patel also wants to discuss risk reduction behavior. Sarah admits to not using condoms because "my boyfriend does not like them and because I am already pregnant what's the use?. She says she is scared to tell her family and her boyfriend that she is pregnant.

Dr. Patel tells Sarah that he would encourage her to start ART to protect her baby. Sarah does not want to take the medication and does not understand why she needs to take medication since she is not sick. He gives her a brochure concerning HIV treatment options during pregnancy. Sarah says she does not have time to read it and she is not interested in reading it because she is not sick.

Discussion Questions:

1. Are there health literacy issues when a provider and a client are from different cultures? Why or why not?

2. How can Dr. Patel explain HIV and its progression so that Sarah will understand?

3. How can Dr. Patel explain the treatment/prevention/risk reduction regimen for HIV?

4. What other issues should be considered based on the age of the client, access to services, and support systems?

5. Based on the case study discussion, what strategies to address health literacy might you include in an action plan for Sarah's care?

6. How could the encounter between Dr. Patel and Sarah have been improved?

7. What ethical responsibilities, if any, does Dr. Patel have to Sarah, her boyfriend and her baby?

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