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

Case Study Adapted from Addressing HIV Care and Substance Abuse

Emma is a homeless 35 year-old African American mother of 4 children between the age of 4 - 10, diagnosed with HIV three months ago. Her HIV last test was five years ago, and she did not return for the results. Emma has a 15 year history of intravenous drug abuse. She stated that her last use of drugs was 12 hours ago. The highest grade Emma achieved in school was the10th and she has a history of Schizophrenia. Emma has had several close friends die of AIDS. She receives care at an urban community clinic where all her providers are of European escent. She is very cautious about starting any drug therapy for HIV because of the stories she has heard of other African Americans being used in an experimental way without their consent. She has not expressed her concerns to her provider.

Her latest labs are as follows:

CD4+ T cell count: 49 cells/mm^3
HIV RNA: 88,000 copies/mL

Discussion Questions

1. What do you do next?
2. What barriers to care are present in this case?
3. How can these barriers be overcome?
4. How can the encounters between Emma and her provider be improved?
5. Should Emma's children be tested? How would you approach this topic with her?
6. Based on the case study what strategies to address health literacy might you include in an active plan for Emma's care?
7. Discuss other Cultural Competence issues that may impact retention into care and treatment.