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

**Case Study Adapted from Addressing HIV Care and African American Model**

Mr. J, a 43-year-old man of Caribbean descent, has been HIV-positive for the past five years. He has kept his diagnosis a secret from his family, including his wife and two sons, as well as his friends and co-workers. During his last visit three months ago, his physician explained that his viral load has continued to increase and his CD4 count has dropped from 550 to 300, despite treatment with antiretroviral medications. He is disappointed.

The patient asked whether he should be taking more of the medicine he brought back from a visit to his native home. This is the first time anyone has become aware that he is taking other "medicines" in addition to those prescribed. He is convinced that this medicine, called "Strong Back," has kept him as healthy as he has been for the past five years.

He is unable to give the scientific name of the medicine and has no idea what the liquid concoction contains. He is convinced that he will die without his two tablespoons of "Strong Back" every morning and every evening.

## *Discussion Questions*

1. What is Mr. J's most immediate need?
2. How can you help support his cultural beliefs while safeguarding his health?
3. What steps can you take to encourage Mr. J to get the support he greatly needs?
4. How do you find out the ingredients contained in the "Strong Back"?
5. What steps will you take in your practice to help identify if patients are taking alternative forms of medicine?
6. Discuss other Cultural Competence issues that may impact retention into care and treatment.