

CHART Acronym and Explanation Guide:

Motivators for Problem Solving



Complications of Untreated Disease

Having an untreated STI can lead to complications such as PID, infertility, neurological damage, and significant harm to the unborn and/or lead to Congenital Syphilis for untreated pregnant women with Syphilis. Having HIV and not seeking care can severely and negatively compromise the immune system by possibly speeding up progression from HIV to AIDS. Untreated disease can ultimately lead to a decreased T-Cell count and increased viral load, rendering the body unable to fight off other infections and placing greater burden on the immune system. For those co-infected with Syphilis, a compromised immune system may have implications in premature advancement to Neurosyphilis. The importance of accessing and staying in medical care, as well as adhering to treatment should be stressed here.



HIV and STI Connection

People get STIs and HIV often through sex (vaginal, anal, oral). HIV can also be spread from mother to child through pregnancy, sharing of drug works, needles, syringes, and cookers. When people have an STI that causes a sore, it allows HIV to enter the body- 'open sores lead to open doors'. The importance of screening for and avoiding other STIs and getting vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B should be stressed here.



Asymptomatic Nature of Disease

People who are unaware of their positive STI/HIV status may not have symptoms for a while, or possibly ever in the case of some STIs, and inadvertently transmit infection to others, potentially many others. For this reason, the importance of STI/HIV testing and knowing one's status should be stressed with the patient as it relates to their partners. The sooner one knows his/her status; the sooner one can get into care and avoid serious health issues. For patient's living with HIV, be sure to highlight the importance of ongoing immune system monitoring.



Re-infection

Here the provider should emphasize the importance of avoiding future exposure to STIs/HIV. Frequent acquisition of bacterial STIs such as Gonorrhea and Chlamydia can cause scarring of fallopian tubes and the urethra. In the case of scarring of the fallopian tubes, fertility may be compromised. It is important to emphasize that people may be re-infected with the same STI after treatment. Some people erroneously believe that STI treatment is the equivalent of an immunization. Acquisition of other STIs and additional HIV can negatively affect viral load, t-cell count, and overall well-being for those living with HIV. Infection with multiple strains of HIV could make drug treatment challenging and/or create drug resistance.



Transmission

All forms of sexual transmission should be stressed here: anal, oral, and vaginal. In the case of HIV, needle-sharing should be routinely mentioned even if the patient does not personally inject drugs. Most importantly, discussion of perinatal STI/HIV transmission is critical.